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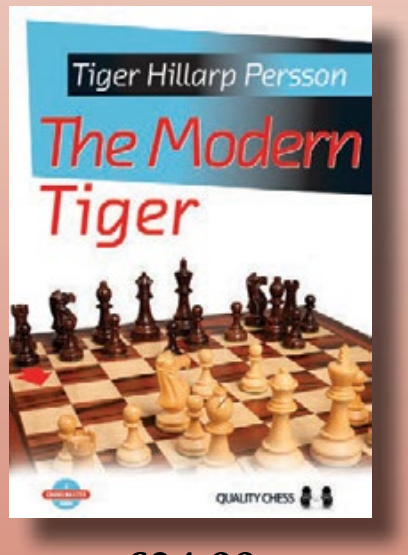

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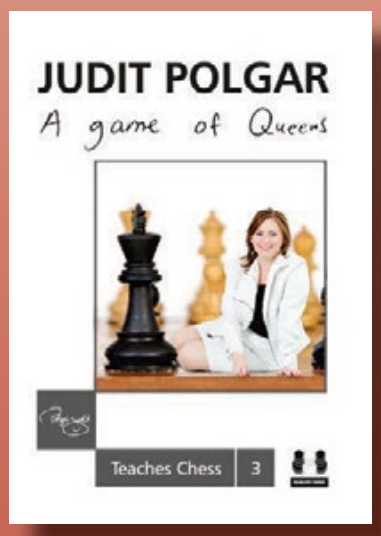

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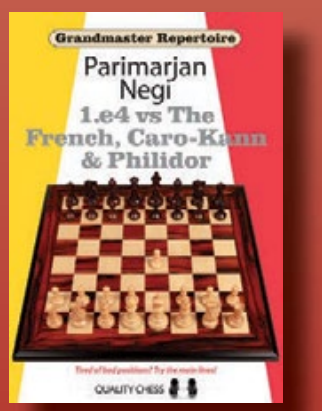

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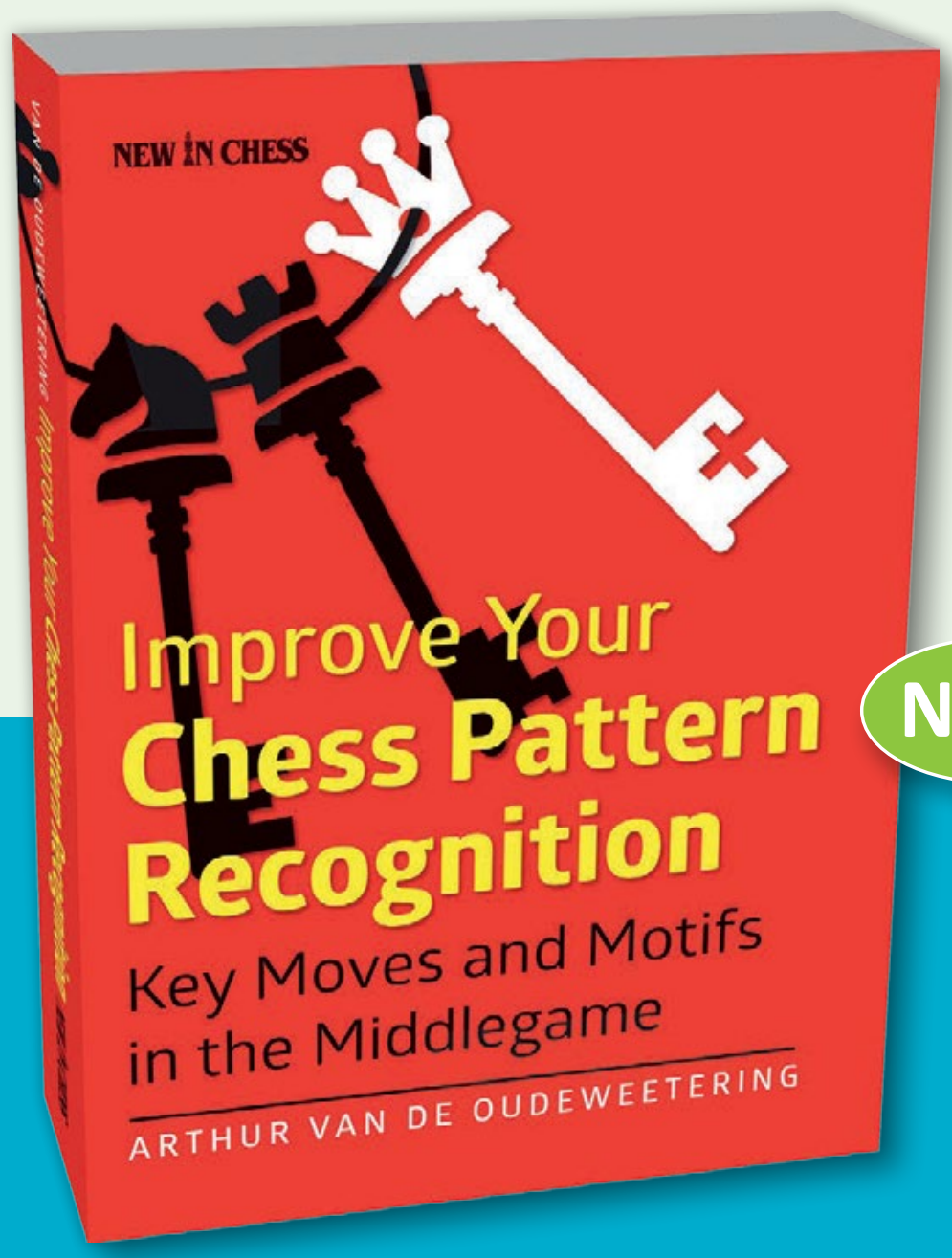

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CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS ISSUE
Michael Adams, Vishy Anand, Yochanan Afek, Manuel Bosboom, Jeroen Bosch, Fabiano Caruana, Anish Giri, Wang Hao, Dominic Lawson, Le Quang Liem, Teimour Radjabov, Matthew Sadler, Sergey Shipov, Nigel Short, Genna Sosonko, Jan Timman, Veselin Topalov, Ju Wenjun, Hou Yifan

PHOTOS AND ILLUSTRATIONS
Maria Emelianova, David Llada, Lennart Ootes, Berend Vonk

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Cover: Fabiano Caruana: New In Chess

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'A lot of skills are developed by practising the game of chess, which is definitely useful in life.'

"Just as the gun enables the inconsequential loner to somehow 'equalize' himself with, say, John Lennon or John F. Kennedy, so the computer allows the talentless to prove themselves 'better' than celebrated grandmasters."
– Dominic Lawson

So Las Vegas

Las Vegas is a place where dreams come true or dreams are shattered. Maurice Ashley's dream certainly came true with the first edition of Millionaire Chess at the Planet Hollywood Resort & Casino. The five-day event boasted a guaranteed prize-fund of one million dollars thanks to the support of the American GM's good friend, entrepreneur Amy Lee, who added the missing amount after the entry fees had been collected. Most of the money ($409,000) was divided in the Open Section, which attracted 30 GMs, but there were substantial prizes in the other categories as well, such as a total pay-out in the U1400 section of $143,000!

The $100,000 first prize in the Open was won by top-seed Wesley So, who defeated his Webster University teammate Ray Robson (who took home $50,000) in the final.

After his biggest victory to date So was congratulated in the live broadcast by hosts Arianne Caoili and Robert Hess on his win and his rise to 10th place in the live ratings. They also asked him why he had declined to play three times, before he finally took up the challenge. So explained that the first day of the tournament was his 21st birthday and that following a painful loss at the world juniors in 2007 he had decided never to play on his birthday again. Apart from that he believed that a late entry allowed his opponents less time to prepare for him.

LENNART OOTES

Tough cookie

The second Sinquefield Cup started with a cold shower, as Fabiano Caruana was one of the first chess grandmasters to undergo the Ice Bucket Challenge that was such a big hit worldwide this summer. Aimed to create more awareness of the disease ALS (amyotrophic lateral sclerosis) the Ice Bucket Challenges led to massive donations, the total amount easily exceeding one

Anish Giri: One night in Paris.

hundred million dollars. Caruana was 'nominated' (great euphemism) by Anish Giri, who was challenged himself by Dutch pop singer (and great chess enthusiast) Nick of the popular duo Nick & Simon. Anish opted for a relatively mild version of the challenge. In the shower of a Paris hotel room he quietly took off a fashionable scarf, removed his glasses to put them in a safe place (just like thousands of others, his video was posted on YouTube) and then lifted a bucket with cold water and poured it over his head.

Fabiano Caruana was not allowed such control over his Ice Bucket Challenge. Seated at a chess table in front of the Saint Louis Chess Hall of Fame, he didn't even have time to take off his glasses (or no one simply thought of it) and got a bucket filled with water and ice emptied over his head. What's more, he had barely overcome the shock of the first bucket when a second one filled with water on the rocks followed. While the chess pieces, swept off the board, lay trembling amongst ice cubes next to the table, Fabiano rose from his chair with a broad grin. In fact, at that point anyone who watched this tough cookie should have realized that he would be a monster in at least the next seven games.

LENNART OOTES

Fabiano Caruana: cool and collected.

Betting his beard

While Anish Giri may have been mildly apprehensive about getting doused with iced water, he certainly didn't mind being the subject of a classic bet that involved the beard of New In Chess Yearbook editor René Olthof. The bet was made some two years ago during

NEW IN CHESS

René Olthof (with beard) at the ECC in Bilbao.

a long car ride to a Bundesliga weekend, where Anish was going to play for his German club SK Turm Emsdetten. Somewhere on the Autobahn, Anish asked a question that every New In Chess employee must have asked him- or herself at some point: 'René, has there ever been a time when you didn't have a beard?' Anish had known René for some six years at the time and (obviously) had never seen him without his trademark beard. Barely had Anish asked his question or his teammate Twan Burg, who had known René for 12 years, chimed in: 'Neither have I!' Unruffled by the inquisitiveness of youth, René calmly explained that of course there had been a time when he didn't have a beard, but that it was quite true that he had never shaved in his entire life.

Suddenly seeing René without his beard had become a challenge, and

HARALD EINARSEN

Anish, René (without beard) and Miranda.

before they knew it the beard had become part of an audacious bet. René declared that he didn't believe Anish would ever reach the world's Top-10, but that if one day he'd be proven wrong, he'd shave off his beard. We didn't ask him if he really believed this, but as René was Anish's first team captain for HMC Calder when he arrived in the Netherlands, we are tempted to believe that this bet is slightly reminiscent of the old Soviet/Russian habit of insuring your game. You bet on a bad result, so that independent of the outcome of the game you will always have something to be pleased about: either a good result or some money (or a beard) by way of consolation.

When the bet was made, Anish Giri was number 25 in the world rankings, or thereabouts, and in the next several months there was little reason to speculate about the fate of René Olthof's beard. But the issue became highly topical at the European Club Cup in Bilbao, where Anish Giri scored a win

over Bo Lindberg in the first round to reach the number 10 spot in the FIDE rating list, and even moved up to seventh place with some further wins.

Following in the footsteps of Euwe, Timman, Piket and Van Wely, Anish Giri became the fifth Dutchman to reach the world's Top-10. And of course he was present when René Olthof had his beard shaved off at the Coiffure 1868 barber shop in Den Bosch.

Unwarranted credibility

Apparently, ice buckets can give your chess a firm boost, but what other stimulants are there besides good old coffee and the time-honoured bar of chocolate to enhance your play? Ever since his endorsement deal with Red Bull, Hikaru Nakamura has made a point of arriving at the board with a can of the energy drink. So far, the drink has not given his results the wings he may have hoped

LENNART OOTES

Hikaru Nakamura and the shirt we won't see for a while.

for, but it was for another reason that the promotion of energy drinks like Red Bull at sports events came under criticism recently. In an article for the *Journal of Medical Ethics*, two Australian medical doctors, Simon Outram and Bob Stewart, argue that the sponsorship of sport by nutritional supplements and sport drinks companies should be re-examined in the light of ethical concerns about the closeness of this relationship. In their paper they look at the main concerns about supplement use and sports drinks with respect to efficacy, health and the risks of doping, giving particular consideration to the health implications. While pointing out that these health implications do not, of themselves, warrant the restriction of such sponsorship, they do argue that 'sport may have found itself lending unwarranted credibility to products which would otherwise not necessarily be seen as beneficial for participation in sports and exercise or as inherently healthy products.'

At the Sinquefield Cup, Nakamura remained faithful to his cans of Red Bull, and during some of the games he also sported a jersey of the New York Red Bulls, an American professional soccer team. Just like the sunglasses last year, it didn't help him much, and probably for that reason he was asked by Norwegian television why he had been wearing the shirt with number 32 on the back. To which Nakamura replied: 'Red Bull happens to be one of my main sponsors. It's more about the can than the shirt, but nevertheless I felt like wearing it. That being said, I now have an 0-3 record with it, I lost against Magnus and I lost against Veselin here, so I don't think you will see much of that shirt for a while.'

The king's new clothes

So maybe another suggestion. If you care about your chess, just wear clothes of a fashion brand that you feel comfortable in, as Magnus Carlsen has been doing for some years now. In his latest appearance as a model for G-Star Raw, the World Champion presents items from the Raw for the Oceans collection. This collection, with denim made from recycled ocean plastic, is curated (and co-designed) by multi-talent Pharrell Williams, who not only is the singer (and writer) of the mega hit *Happy*, but (in case you didn't know already) also the composer of an incredible number of other hits for various artists, a producer and a fashion designer.

Magnus Carlsen in Printed Fallden Bomber Jacket of the Raw for the Oceans collection.

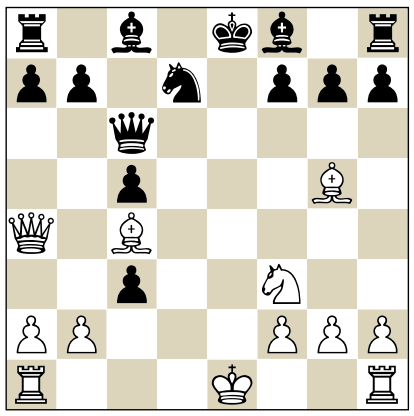
New Grand Prix cycle

With the FIDE presidential elections behind us, the moment had come for FIDE to announce a number of events that had been temporarily put on the backburner. Especially the venues and dates of the Grand Prix tournaments were eagerly awaited by many top players. As we are going to press, the first GP in Baku, Azerbaijan, is well under way, and we now know that the 2014-15 cycle will consist of four legs. Almost immediately after Baku the second GP will take place in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. The last two legs will be held in Tehran, Iran, in February, and in Khanty-Mansiysk, Russia, in May. Originally, Moscow was announced as the city where the fourth GP was to take place, but soon after the event was moved to Siberia.

As an essential part of the World Championship cycle, the Grand Prix remains a cycle of which we can only hope that it will develop into the elite tournament circuit it should be. So it is regrettable that one GP is held in a country where not all participants can go (Iran) and that again so many top players declined to take part. With Carlsen, Aronian, Anand, Topalov and Kramnik missing it is easy to understand why it is so hard to find sponsorship for the GP tournaments. ■

Father Taimanov

I don't know who are the players (Peng and Haast) that you mention with regard to Position 5 in Beware: Brilliancy! in New In Chess 2014/6. However, this position also occurred in the game Taimanov-Polugaevsky, 27th USSR championship 1960!



position after 11...♕c6

Taimanov did not miss the amazing 12.0-0-0!! and Polugaevsky did not take the queen but played 12...cxb2+ 13.♔xb2 ♗e7, but lost all the same.

I think that it should be mentioned that the 'father' of this position is Mark Taimanov.

Nadav Gruengard
Kiryat Ono, Israel

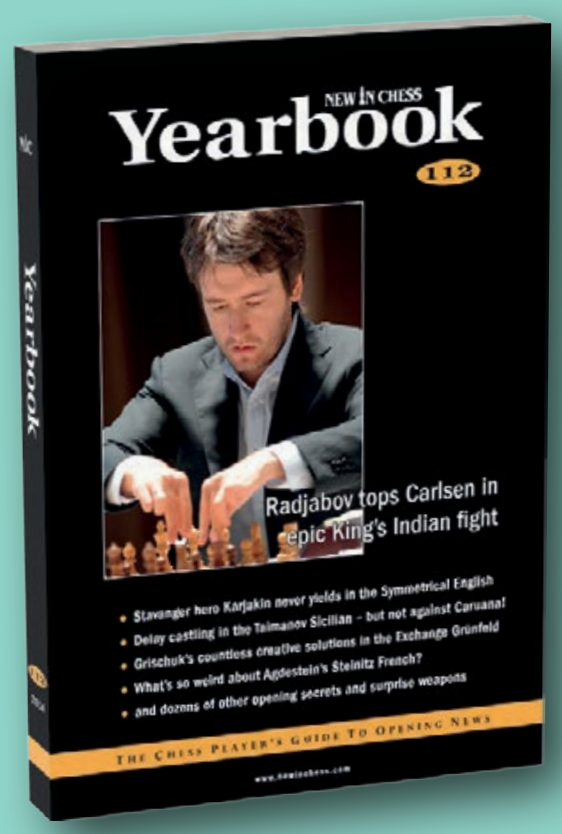
Editorial postscript:

Yochanan Afek did mention this famous prequel, but unfortunately his reference was left out for space reasons.

Genuine belief

I mostly agree with Nigel Short in his article, 'I'm a believer' in New In Chess 2014/4. But he runs aground when he says Reshevsky's refusal to play on the Sabbath was a charade. GM Alex Fishbein's recent letter (New In Chess 2014/5) proves this isn't so, but not quite in the way he intended. Before Alex even became an IM, he was scheduled to play Sammy on a Saturday in 1986. Reshevsky, who would have had an easy win, refused to take part, the tournament director refused to offer dispensation and Sammy had to forfeit the game. But this does not necessarily prove Sammy was true to his religion. He could hardly pick and choose which Sabbath to honour and which to break. Inconsistency would make him a hypocrite so he would have had to suffer some painful losses either way. Yet how would he benefit from this so called charade? Surely his belief was genuine for it was as damaging to him as it was annoying to others.

Reshevsky is a hero of mine. He fought as tenaciously as did Lasker, had a clear and nuanced middlegame reminiscent of Capablanca, but was weak in the openings, which put him in frequent time-trouble. He suffered the same underhanded treatment as did Fischer when the Soviets fought hard to defeat him while often drawing with each other. This almost certainly denied Reshevsky a shot at the World Championship.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But rigid religious belief, in any religion, is not always a second cousin to virtue. When Reshevsky played Arnold Denker in the 1942 US Championship, Sammy's flag fell. As Denker says in his book *The Bobby Fischer I knew and other stories*, the tournament director 'rushed to our table, picked up the clock from behind, and turned it around so that Sammy's clock was now on my side. He instantly declared me forfeited. I appealed to Sammy, who would only say he was not the tournament director.' Denker complained loud and long but in vain.

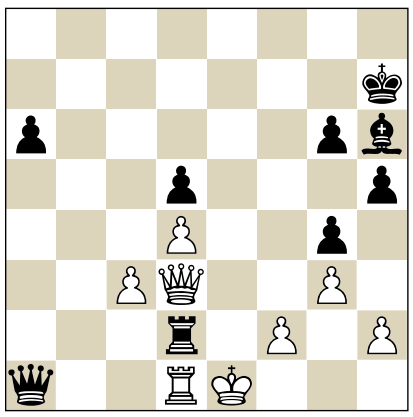
Returning to Short's article and the issue of whether God exists I can only add this: imagine an alternative universe with an earth just like ours yet thoroughly Godless and as a result its history is filled with wars, murder, theft, corruption, rape, child abuse, racial hatred, ethnic cleansing and a massive indifference to global warming. Wouldn't we be relieved to leave such a place and return to our own blessed planet?

Leon Arden
London, United Kingdom

Premature resignation

In New In Chess 2014/5, Jan Timman showed the game Larsen-Ljubojevic, Brussels 1987.

It seems that Larsen resigned prematurely after 35...♖xd2.

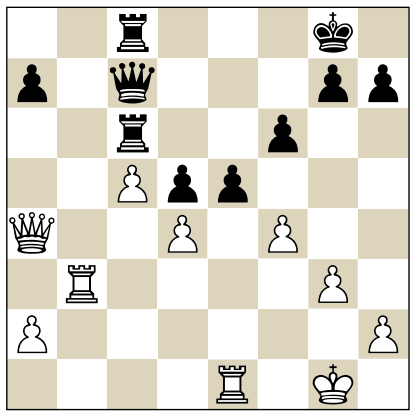


The position seems to be a draw after 36.♕xg6+! ♔xg6 37.♖xa1. Black will lose both of his queenside pawns.

Kari Tikkanen
Iisalmi, Finland

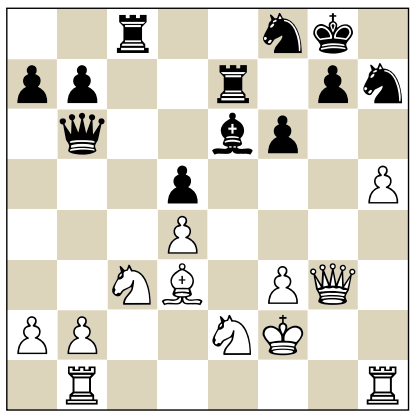
Best moves

I would like to comment on two positions from Matthew Sadler's book review in New In Chess 2014/5. My first remark concerns a find of his in a game between Vlastimil Hort and Jonathan Mestel in London 1982.



In his analysis Sadler suggested 26.♖be3. ('The point is that White is planning to launch a kingside attack. Yes, I had a bit of a one-track mind in those days.') Instead of 26.♖be3 he does not even mention 26.fxe5 fxe5 27.♖xe5 ♖xc5? (otherwise Black is a pawn down with a completely lost position), when 28.♖e8+ ♔f7 29.♖f3+ ♔g6 30.♖e6+ wins at once for White.

In the same article Matthew Sadler presents a puzzle from a game Knaak-Geller, in which Mark Dvoretsky gives



22.♗c2 as the best move. However, chess engines give this move only as 4th best for White. Perhaps his intention is to praise the coach and his training programme?

Bogdan Lalic
Sutton, Surrey, United Kingdom

Write to us

New In Chess, P.O. Box 1093
1810 KB Alkmaar, The Netherlands
or e-mail: editors@newinchess.com
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In his words

How about if we could watch the profanity in New In Chess? Your latest issue, 2014/6 was excellent, as usual, but the use of the word 'bull---t' 2-3 times was out of line, in my view.

At least you didn't use the F-word, like *The Economist* just did.

Or, perhaps, are magazine standards a bit different over on your side of the Atlantic?

Howard Sample
Toledo, OH, USA

Editorial postscript:

We were quoting the FIDE Deputy President and were careful to repeat his exacts words.

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PUBLISHER: Allard Hoogland
EDITORS-IN-CHIEF:
Dirk Jan ten Geuzendam, Jan Timman
CONTRIBUTING EDITOR: Anish Giri
EDITORS: Peter Boel, René Olthof
ART-DIRECTION: Jan Scholtus
PRODUCTION: Joop de Groot
TRANSLATORS:
Sarah Hurst, Ken Neat, Piet Verhagen
SALES AND ADVERTISING: Remmelt Otten

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PHONE: 00-31-(0)72-51 27 137
FAX: 00-31-(0)72-51 58 234
E-MAIL:
SUBSCRIPTIONS: nic@newinchess.com
EDITORS: editors@newinchess.com
SALES AND ADVERTISING:
otten@newinchess.com

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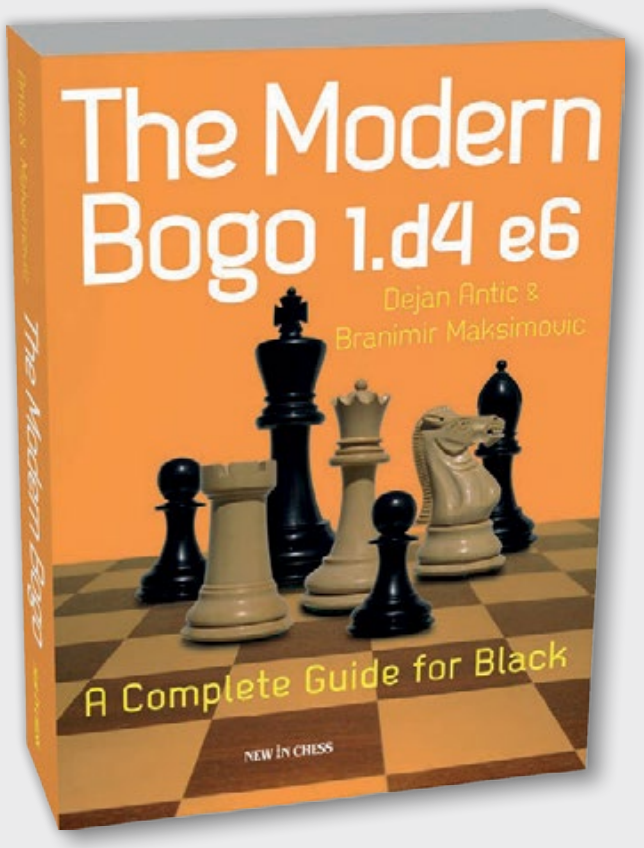

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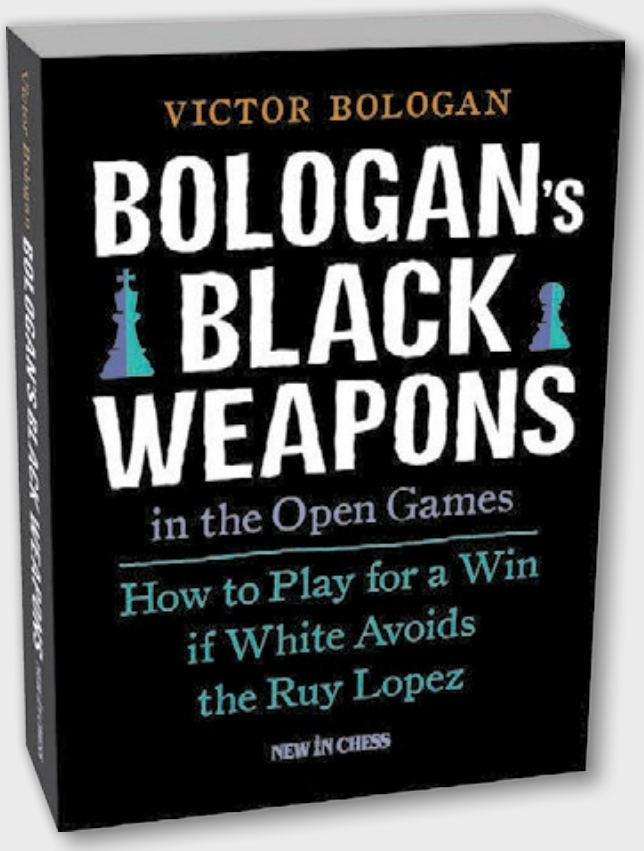

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Fair & Square

Veselin Topalov: 'I was plus two against regular guys, but I lost two to Fabiano. That shouldn't count really.' *(During the final press conference at the Sinquefield Cup)*

Alexander Grischuk: 'In Russia we have a saying: a soldier who doesn't want to be a General, is a bad soldier.' *(When asked at the ECC in Bilbao if he still had any ambitions to become World Champion)*

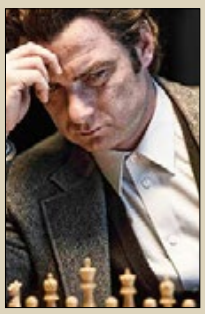
Tobey Maguire: 'There were a lot of challenges, he's a very complicated guy.' *(On playing the role of Bobby Fischer, at the Toronto International Film Festival premiere of Pawn Sacrifice)*

Garry Kasparov: 'Scotland should make me an honorary citizen of their country in recognition of what I've just done for them!' *(After the 1990 title match against Anatoly Karpov, where he played the Scotch Opening scoring 1½/2)*

Peter Thiel: 'I probably still play too much chess on the internet. I haven't played tournament chess in a long time. It is some strange combination of art and science and sport, and it's somewhat addictive. It has some very good things and some unhealthy addictive things about it too, I think.' *(The Silicon Valley entrepreneur interviewed by TechRepublic.com)*

Edward Lasker: 'It has been said that man is distinguished from animal in that he buys more books than he can read. I should like to suggest that the inclusion of a few chess books would help to make the distinction unmistakable.'

Arthur Koestler: 'When a chess player looks at the board, he does not see a static mosaic, a "still life", but a magnetic field of forces, charged with energy – as Faraday saw stresses surrounding magnets and currents as curves in space, or as Van Gogh saw vortices in the skies of Provence.'



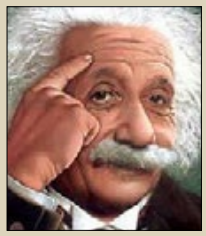
Liev Schreiber: 'I know how to play chess, I just don't know how to win.' *(The actor playing Boris Spassky at the premiere of Pawn Sacrifice)*

Anatoly Karpov: 'Pawns not only create the sketch for the whole painting, they are also the soil, the foundation, of any position.'

Bent Larsen: 'For me chess is at the same time a game, a sport, a science and an art. And perhaps even more than that. This is something hard to explain to those who do not play the game well. One must learn to play it correctly to savour its richness.'

James Michener: 'In a rather wandering life I have known personally only two geniuses, Tennessee Williams, who used words and human situations more brilliantly than any of us, and Bobby Fischer, the chess champion, who was geared in some wild unique way. Both men found that to be the vessel housing genius was an intolerable condition and each was destroyed by that burden.' *(In the foreword to Lawrence Grobel's Conversations with Capote)*

Vassily Smyslov: 'Simple positions give an inexperienced player an opportunity not only to understand, but also to feel deeply what each piece is able to do.'



Albert Einstein: 'Master chess grips its exponents, shaking the mind and brain so that inner freedom and independence of even the toughest character cannot remain unaffected.'

Wesley So: 'I would prohibit quick draws and fixing games for every tournament. In which other sport do you see the players fixing their games?!'

Josh Waitzkin: 'Dvoretsky loves to watch gifted chess minds struggle with his problems. He basks in his power while young champions are slowly drained of their audacious creativity. As a student, I found these sessions to be resonant of Orwell's prison scenes in *1984*, where independently minded thinkers were ruthlessly broken down until all that was left was a shell of a person.' *(In his book The Art of Learning)*

Vladimir Kramnik: 'Chess is an incredibly emotional game. If everything around you is harmonious, when you are feeling good, you are in a creative mood. If something is disturbing you and you are in a bad mood, then it is difficult to be creative. So you have to create the right atmosphere.'

Once upon a time in the Midwest...

The second edition was billed as the strongest chess tournament in history, with an average rating of 2802, but the 2014 Sinquefield Cup will mainly be remembered for Fabiano Caruana's unbelievable seven-win streak and his stellar 3097 performance. In the process, the 22-year-old Italian defeated Magnus Carlsen and raced up the rating list, where he is now within striking distance of the World Champion. Was the winner lucky? Not exactly if you consider that he could have claimed the full point in Rounds 8 and 9, too... **Dirk Jan ten Geuzendam** returned to St. Louis, where he thoroughly enjoyed another superbly run show and witnessed history in the making.

'W

What makes me happy is that so many people enjoy the event. So many people come here. We've had people from as far away as Australia and Bombay, India, to come and watch this tournament in St. Louis. That's extremely gratifying. Just a few

Fabiano Caruana is all aglow at the Burning Boards night on the free day. Who wouldn't be after you've just finished the first half of a Category-XXIII event with a perfect 5-0 score?

minutes ago a mother came up with her 12-year-old son and said he had chosen chess over hockey. It's really thrilling.' Rex Sinquefield speaks in a neutral tone, but the way he formulates his sentences betrays his genuine gratitude. One day before his seventieth birthday, as the last games of the final round are still in progress, he looks back on the second edition of the chess tournament that bears his name. Not because he wanted it to be named after him, but because the people around him insisted ('I got outvoted on that one').

The tournament has grown, without losing any of the attraction that made it such a great event last year. The field was increased to six players and first prize went up from $ 70,000 to $ 100,000. For the rest, things were very much the same. Lester's, the popular sports bar next to the Saint Louis Chess Club and Scholastic Center, where the grandmasters played, was once again turned into a chess bar with chess on all the television screens, live commentary and free food included in the admission tickets. Additionally, the Hall of Fame across the street also offered live commentary and no fewer than three exhibitions. Two smaller ones, one of 20th-century composer John Cage and contemporary multimedia artist Glenn Kaino (on the free day the players took part in a repeat of his 2007 performance Burning Boards with chess pieces made of burning candles) and another one, 'Strategy by Design', on games designed by Michael Graves. And a big one, 'A Memorable Life: A Glimpse into the Complex Mind of Bobby Fischer.'

Sinquefield says that the total budget of the tournament is not a secret, but that quite honestly he cannot reveal what it is: 'It's in the several hundreds of thousands for sure. But I just don't know in detail.' Interestingly, he claims that the main reason why the tournament keeps growing and expanding is luck: 'People come up with ideas and they execute them

so well. Like the largest chess piece in the world (in front of the Hall of Fame). One of the staff members said, why don't we build the largest chess piece in the world? And faced with that compelling logic, how could I say no? (Laughs)'

He agrees that he may lend luck a helping hand by his philosophy of hiring staff: 'I've said we never want to hire anyone who creates tension. We want people who are fun to be around, fun to work with. Who are enthusiastic about their job. You walk in, there are people smiling, they are happy to be there, they make others happy, that's what it's all about.'

It's a description that is recognizable for anyone who has visited the Saint Louis Chess Club or any of the superb events that have made it the centre of American chess. But then, enthusiasm and creativity don't explain everything. As Sinquefield puts it: 'I think the budget is driven by ideas and how far they think they can reach into my pockets. It's such a good thing for St. Louis and for the world of chess that I've been very willing to go along with them.'

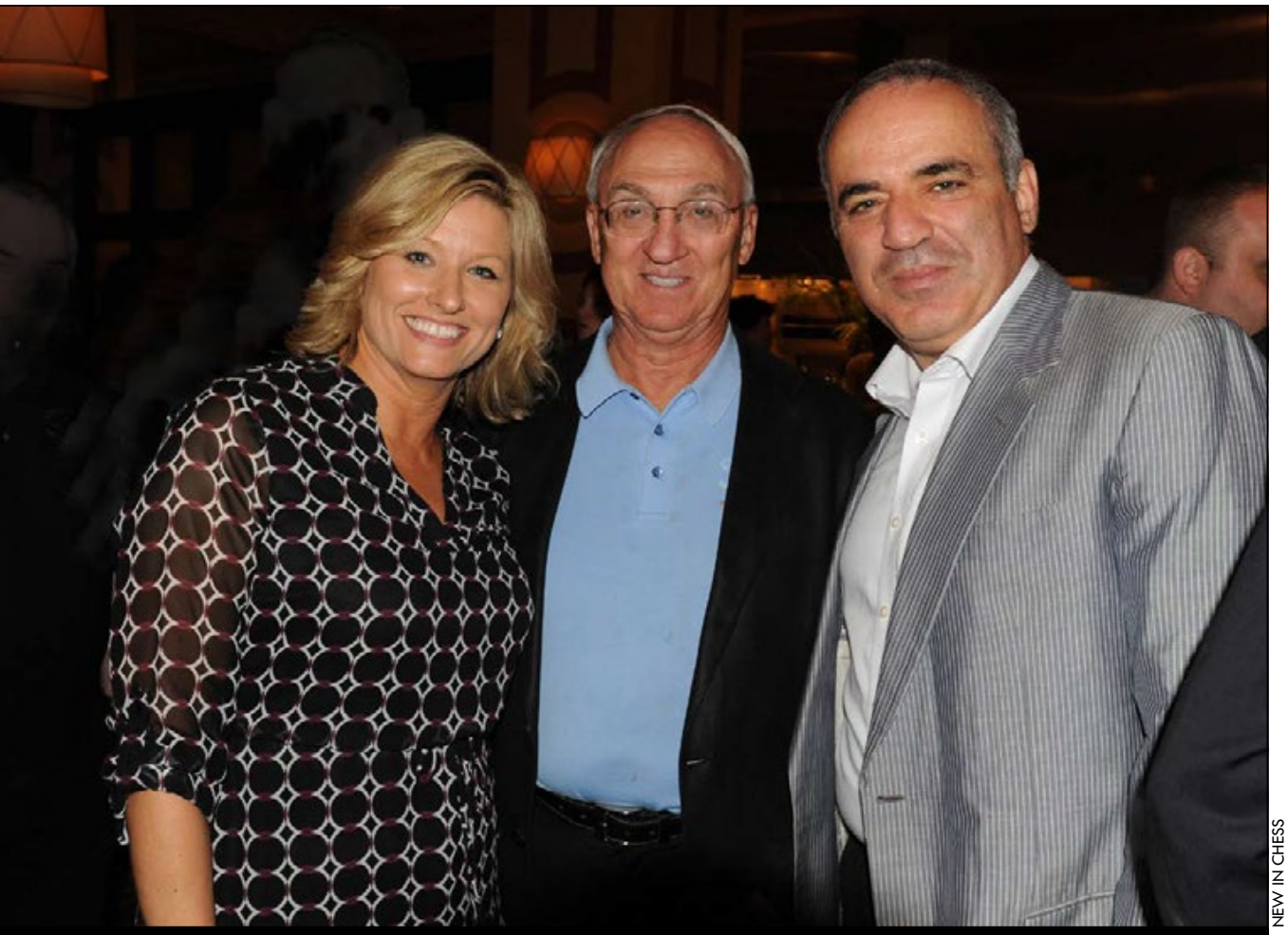
Rex Sinquefield: 'I'm just glad that the future of chess does not depend on the future of FIDE.'

Seeing what has been accomplished in St. Louis and listening to Sinquefield, one can only think back in disbelief to the General Assembly in Tromsø, where the American's offer to invest 10 million dollar in chess was spurned by the delegates and ridiculed by FIDE president Kirsan Ilyumzhinov. In reply to Garry Kasparov's speech, in which Sinquefield's offer was mentioned, Ilyumzhinov laughingly promised to invest 20 million, a boast that got the house in raptures.

Sinquefield is not very eager to speak about the elections, but has drawn some conclusions. 'This is my first experience, so I am really a novice and I almost hesitate to respond. But I know that in my camp people were hoping for much more, not necessarily to win, but for things to be much closer. So there was strong disappointment at the result and it makes you pause and think what's the future of FIDE. And I'm just glad that the future of chess does not depend on the future of FIDE. I think that what's important, seeing all the problems there are in FIDE and with FIDE and caused by FIDE, is that all the countries and regions in the world need to develop their own best chess. And have it rise that way. We're not going to reform the governing organization from above; it's just not going to happen.'

One initiative he'd welcome is a Grand Slam cycle. 'I'd love to see four or five Sinquefield-level tournaments around the world and that we could follow the model that has worked so well in tennis or golf. That the winner of those tournaments is recognized as the number one player in the world. In some sense the world championship isn't necessary. Last night I asked Magnus, what is more important, being World Champion or being recognized as number one? And he said, being recognized as number one, because it's much harder to achieve. We only have to go back a couple of years to see two people contesting the world championship who were nowhere near the top. And that can happen, given the selection process.'

And there's hope at the other end of the spectrum: 'The growth in scholastic chess. That's the sleeper that could change everything down the road.' And here, too, he knows what he is talking about: 'Scholastic outreach is the main part of our club; we're in about



Garry Kasparov appeared as surprise guest on Rex Sinquefield's 70th birthday. On the left Joy Bray, the General Manager of the Saint Louis Chess Club.

NEW IN CHESS

LENNART OOTES

The Class of 2014 is ready for their first activity in St. Louis, the highly popular autograph session: Hikaru Nakamura, Magnus Carlsen, Veselin Topalov, Fabiano Caruana, Levon Aronian and Maxime Vachier-Lagrave.

a hundred schools in the St. Louis area. We have between 30 and 40 part-time teachers, which is really a lot.'

The second Sinquefield Cup was a great gift to the chess world, but the sponsor also got a gift in return. Fabiano Caruana's seven-win streak immediately became part of chess history and will be remembered as one of the most outstanding and unique performances ever. Like anyone else, Sinquefield could barely believe his eyes as the gift was unwrapped. 'Who could have possibly imagined the results? Somebody going 7-0, that's just crazy. Everybody is going to talk about that for quite some time. I just saw an article in the *Wall Street Journal* talking about him as the Italian Bobby Fischer.'

As we have been talking about the promotion of chess, I wonder if Caruana should work on his public image. Everyone agrees that he's a terrific player, but to the outside world he may appear shy and reserved. Should he try to be more outspoken? Not if you ask Rex Sinquefield. 'I think he should keep being himself. Absolutely, don't try to change. He's charming. He is, as they say, artlessly frank, very honest. Just stay that way. No need for flamboyance. The stage flamboyance doesn't last very long, it doesn't go well. I think he's a great sportsman. He's extraordinarily polite, correct. He reminds me of, although this won't make any sense to your readers around the world, but he reminds me of Mark McGwire, who was a great baseball player and homerun hitter for the St. Louis Cardinals. Mark was extraordinarily polite and deferential to everyone. And that's what Caruana is like. And intellectually he is very honest about his play. In that sense he frankly reminds me of Bobby Fischer, who was very honestly critical of himself.'

Bobby Fischer is a comparison that also inevitably comes up when I speak to one of the special guests in St. Louis. For the final weekend, legendary photographer Harry Benson has come over from New York. He'd been invited to photograph all the participants, both while playing and in a private session to which no one else is allowed ('I don't want nobody with telephones taking photos behind my back'). Two years ago, the Hall of Fame dedicated an exhibition to Benson's Fischer photos to coincide with the publication of his book about the 1972 match against Spassky. Inevitably the current Fischer exhibition includes several of his photos. At the age of 84, Benson is still working with passion and immediately wants to know more about the young chess players he is going to meet. He has heard about Caruana's extraordinary result, and his interest in the Italian winner only grows when I tell him that in his younger years Fabiano had already broken several of Bobby Fischer's records.

As I talk with Harry Benson, he inadvertently makes me draw a totally different parallel. Among his countless iconic photos, I particularly like those he took of the Beatles meeting Cassius Clay in Miami in 1964. For a present-day viewer this is the encounter between five of the most famous men of the 20th century, but in fact neither the Beatles nor Clay fully realized who they were meeting. Clay was preparing for his world championship bout against Sonny Liston. As Benson told me when I interviewed him on his Fischer book (see New In Chess 2011/4), he initially wanted to go to Liston's training camp, but the champ said

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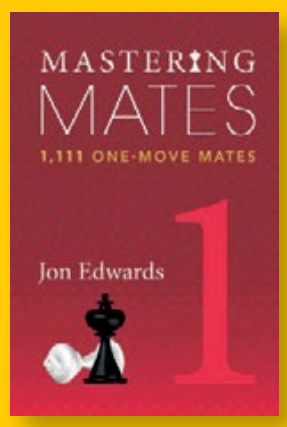

Most of these problems are relatively easy, but not all of them! Indeed, many involve solutions that are not completely obvious. In fact, some of the masters who played these games actually missed the mates!

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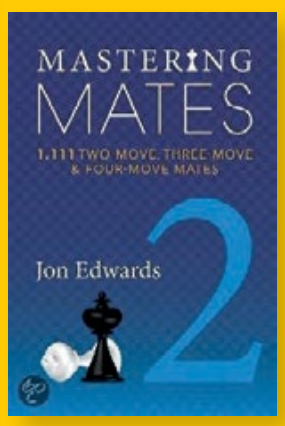

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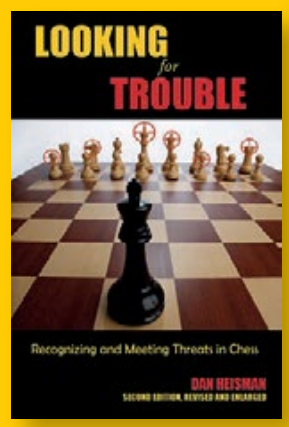

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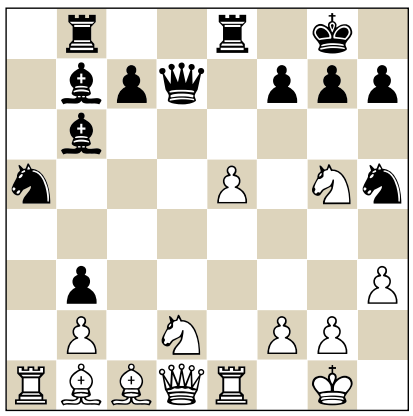
he didn't want to see 'those punks'. And so he took the Beatles to 'second choice' Cassius Clay, who as the inventor of trash-talk treated them to his specialty ('Who is the most beautiful?'), much to the annoyance of the Englishmen.

Just like it's fascinating to look at these photos with this background knowledge, it's fascinating to look at the bulletins of the Sinquefield Cup knowing that the authors didn't know how Caruana would continue, and see their astonishment grow by the day. As the other two games were drawn in Round 1, the Italian immediately made the headline of the first bulletin with his win over Topalov: Caruana takes early lead at 2014 Sinquefield Cup. The next day 'Caruana stays perfect' with his second win, but it's too early to get overly excited. Things change in Round 3, and it's easy to understand why. Not only does Caruana win his third game, he also defeats the World Champion with the black pieces.

By then the tournament has attracted worldwide attention. Not only did Caruana start with a hat-trick, there's a lot happening to keep the followers around the globe talking and speculating. Magnus Carlsen, not yet showing his best form, is being challenged by a younger rival, and Aronian and Nakamura seem to be struggling. In the third round, the American demonstrates his lack of form and lets Topalov bounce back after two defeats.



Topalov-Nakamura
St. Louis 2014 (3)
position after 21.♘g5

21...g6? Nakamura had calculated the bishop sac on f2, but couldn't get it to work. On a better day he would have found 21...♗xf2+ 22.♔xf2 ♕d4+ 23.♖e3 (23.♔f1 allows 23...♘g3 mate) 23...♖xe5, and the complications favour Black, for instance 24.♗e4 ♖xg5 25.♗xb7 ♘xb7 26.♕xb3 ♘f4 27.♕xb7 ♖xg2+, and Black is winning. **22.e6!** Topalov grabbed the chance to get back into the game and proved more effective in the tactical skirmish that followed.

The local favourite didn't recover and finished on –3. One of his losses was against Magnus Carlsen, who increased his score against Nakamura in classical chess to 11-0, with 15 draws.

While everyone was impressed by Caruana's wins, no one could have predicted what would happen in the next three rounds, when he would not only win his game every time, but also double his lead over the runner-up!

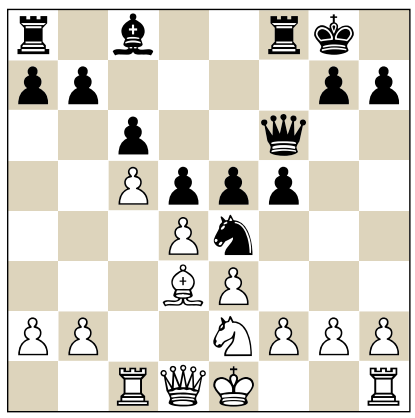
Caruana's fourth victim was Levon Aronian, who, following his loss against Vachier-Lagrave in Round 3, was again outplayed. Last year, the Armenian blamed his failure in St. Louis on his over-eagerness to do well in the United States. This time he said he 'just played terribly'. For his opponents it was clear that he was still suffering from the aftereffects of the nose surgery he had had before Norway Chess, but Aronian wouldn't hear of it. 'This didn't have any impact. I don't normally have excuses and I don't want to come up with them now.'

Caruana said that his win against Aronian was his best effort in St. Louis. Quite remarkably, none of the other participants mentioned this game when they were asked to name the best game of the tournament, and all of them chose one of Caruana's. Vachier-Lagrave and Aronian went for his win against Carlsen, while Nakamura called the Italian's win

against Vachier-Lagrave 'fantastico'. Fortunately, Caruana agreed to annotate all three of these masterpieces for our analysis section!

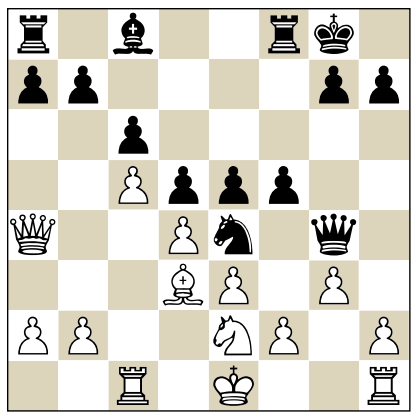
His win in Round 5, a poor performance by Nakamura, didn't qualify for one of Caruana's better games, but the subtle opening idea against Topalov in Round 6 and the steady hand with which he converted his advantage were impressive again.

What happens to your opponents when you simply win every game ('Chess as it should be played,' as Carlsen called it later) came to the surface in Round 7, when Vachier-Lagrave fell victim to the Caruana effect. Within a handful of moves the Frenchman managed to ruin a perfectly normal position.



Vachier-Lagrave-Caruana
St. Louis 2014 (7)
position after 13...e5

Black is fine, but after 14.0-0 White would be fine, too. Instead, Vachier-Lagrave went: **14.♕a4?** And after **14...♕h4** he panicked with **15.g3?** when 15.0-0 was still OK. Now White has to watch out. **15...♕g4**



NEW IN CHESS

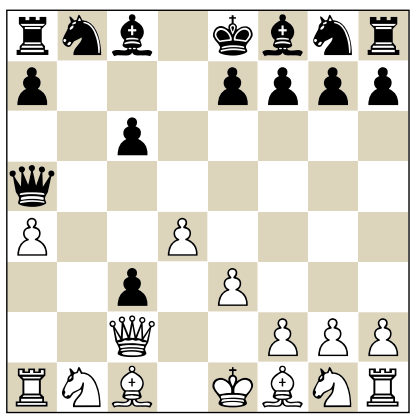
Randy Sinquefield and three motivated members of his team that defeated his father's 'Team Rex' (including Kasparov!) in the Ultimate Moves event the day after the prize-giving.

16.♖f1? He really should have played 16.♕d1 to limit Black's advantage. **16...♘g5** Now only 17.♘g1 would keep White in the game, although it doesn't look very attractive. **17.♔d2 ♘f3+ 18.♔c3 ♘xh2** And Black was a pawn up and didn't face many problems to win.

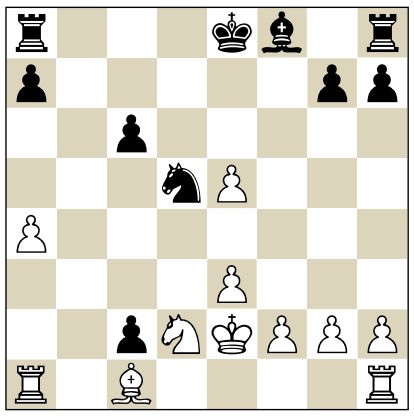
With 7/7 Caruana had not yet won the tournament, but he was close, leading Carlsen by a full three points! The World Champion hardly had to work for his 11th classical win against Nakamura in that same Round 7.

SL 11.5 – D10
Magnus Carlsen
Hikaru Nakamura
St. Louis 2014 (7)

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♘c3 dxc4 4.e3 b5 5.a4 b4 6.♘e4 ♕d5 7.♘d2 c3 8.bxc3 bxc3 9.♘b1 ♕a5 10.♕c2



A well-known theoretical position, in which Black normally continues 10...♘a6. **10...e5** A sharp deviation. **11.♘f3 ♘a6?** But this doesn't work. He should have taken on d4. **12.♘xe5 ♘b4** This looks threatening, but yields nothing. **13.♕b3 ♗e6 14.♗c4 c2 15.♗xe6 ♘d3+ 16.♔e2 ♘xe5 17. dxe5 fxe6 18.♕xe6+ ♘e7 19.♘d2** And now because of White's strong initiative Black had to exchange queens with **19...♕d5 20.♕xd5 ♘xd5**

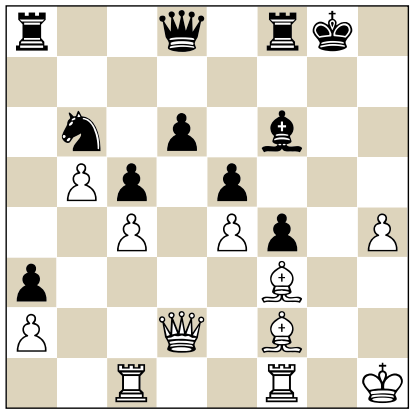


And was left with a lost endgame.

With three rounds to go and three points ahead of his closest rival, Caruana was in clover. At least, in any normal world. But his next opponent was Carlsen, the runner-up, and hadn't he been involved in some of the weirdest finishes ever seen in chess? To begin with, the Norwegian had to beat Caru-

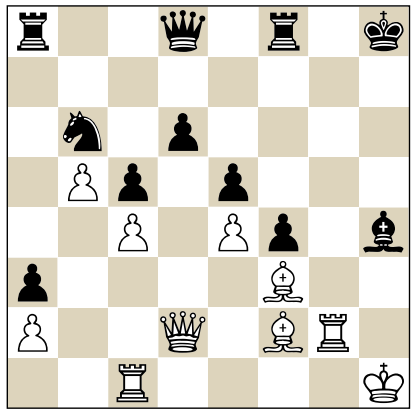
ana with the black pieces, and if that happened, you could never know what would happen to the leader's nerves.

The game certainly was exciting, but it was Caruana who grabbed the initiative with aggressive play against Carlsen's Accelerated Dragon, and even missed a chance to keep a perfect score.



Caruana-Carlsen
St. Louis 2014 (8)
position after 28...♘b6

With adventurous play Caruana has created chances against the black king. **29.♖cd1** The wrong rook. Of course the pawn on c4 cannot be taken because of ♕d5+, but soon the pawn will be hanging anyway. White would have had excellent winning chances after 29.♖fd1, as Black cannot take the pawn: 29...♗xh4 (and 29...♗e7 fails to 30.♗xc5 dxc5 31.♕g2+) 30.♖g1+ ♔h8 (running the other way won't help either: 30...♔f7 31.♗h5+ ♔e6 32.♖g7 ♗e7 33.♗xc5 dxc5 34.♕g2, and the black king is in deep trouble) 31.♖g2.



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

And the position of Black's king poses insurmountable problems, e.g. 31...♖f7 32.♖h2 ♖h7 33.♗xh4 ♖xh4 34.♕f2! ♖xh2+ 35.♕xh2+ ♔g7 36.♖g1+, and the king will soon be hunted down. **29...♔h8 30.♕xd6 ♕xd6 31.♖xd6 ♘xc4 32.♖d5** 32.♖d7 was White's last chance. **32...♘e3 33.♗xe3 fxe3 34.♗e2 ♗xh4 35.♖f5 ♖xf5 36.exf5 ♖d8 37.♖xd8+ ♗xd8 38.♔g2 ♔g7 39.♔f3 ♔f6 40.♔e4 c4 41.♗xc4 ♗b6 42.♗d3** Draw.

And so it was finally the World Champion himself who stopped Fabiano Caruana from an even more incredible streak, with a draw. Carlsen could not repeat his win of last year and was not entirely happy with his play, but all in all, his result could hardly be called a disaster. He finished in sole second place with a 2822 performance and may even see the imperfections in his play as a useful wake-up call for his match

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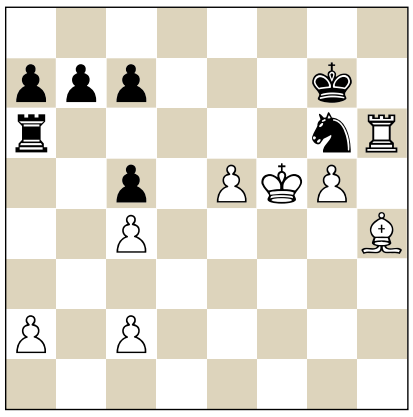
Before he photographed him ('He's a champion. He's got cold eyes.'), Harry Benson showed Fabiano Caruana photos from his Fischer book.

against Anand. And he certainly didn't lose his sense of humour. At the final press conference, when the other players were asked to sum up Caruana's feat in one word, Carlsen got a big laugh when he quipped: 'Depressing!'

Caruana finished with two draws, against Nakamura and Aronian. In the penultimate round he missed an excellent chance to defeat Nakamura, igniting discussions that with a little bit of luck he could have made 9/9! With a neat sacrifice on move 40 he could have scored another win.



Caruana-Nakamura
St. Louis 2014 (9)
position after 39...♔g7

Short on time, Caruana quickly withdrew his bishop. **40.♗f2** With more time on the clock he might have found the following sacrifice and manoeuvre: 40.♖xg6+! ♖xg6 41.e6 ♔h7 42.e7 ♖g8 43.♔f6 ♖g6+ 44.♔f7 ♖g7+ 45.♔e6 ♖g8 46.♔d7, with an easy win.

On the day after the last round, which had been kept free for possible tie-break games, I went to see the winner for an interview that you will find further on. Before the photo-shoot at the end of the afternoon, I introduced Fabiano Caruana to Harry Benson, who signed a Fischer photo book for him – and immediately started telling him stories about his walks with Fischer in Iceland and trying to get to know Fabiano better in the few minutes before he was going to photograph him. Later that evening, I asked Harry Benson what impression he had got from the tournament winner, by watching and observing him and trying to catch his personality with his camera. The answer, in a slight but beautiful Scottish accent, was quick and determined: 'He's a champion, a winner. He's got cold eyes.'

Winning streak

As **Fabiano Caruana's** winning streak kept growing, only to end after a stunning seven consecutive wins, the search for historical parallels led to lively debates. Was this comparable to **Fischer's** 6-0 match victories over Taimanov and Larsen? Or was it unfair to compare tournament games against various opponents with a number of games against the same player? Was it perhaps in the same league as Fischer's baffling 11-0 in the 1963 United States championship? Or was it ridiculous to compare an exclusive gathering of elite players with the mixed company of a national championship?

Players of mixed or weaker strength often made the comparisons dubious. **Kortchnoi** burst away with 8 wins in Wijk aan Zee in 1968, but his opposition included both GMs and IMs. And in 1978 **Beliavsky** scored an unbelievable 13-0 in Alicante, but the average rating of his opponents was about 2400.

Caruana's supremacy certainly brought back memories of **Topalov's** 6½ from 7 in the first half of the 2005 San Luis World Championship, but the Bulgarian was the first to call the Italian's clean streak more impressive.

No doubt the best comparison was **Karpov's** 6-0 in the first rounds of the 1994 Linares tournament, an elite gathering that he went on to win with the incredible score of 11 from 13. Starting with the black pieces and alternating colours, Karpov defeated Lautier, Bareev, Illescas, Topalov, Ivanchuk and Judit Polgar. You may decide for yourself if Caruana's list was more impressive. In any case there was one important similarity. Karpov was finally stopped in Round 7 by Kasparov. In Caruana's case it also took the World Champion to finally interrupt his explosion in Round 8. But then he had already defeated that same champ in Round 3…

Fabiano's Finest

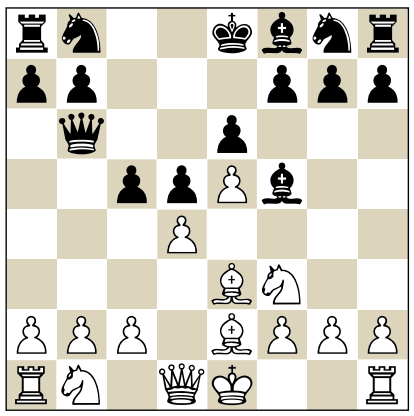
The winner of the 2014 Sinquefield Cup annotates the best three games from his historic winning streak

NOTES BY
Fabiano Caruana

CK 4.11 – B12
Fabiano Caruana
Maxime Vachier-Lagrave
St.Louis 2014 (2)

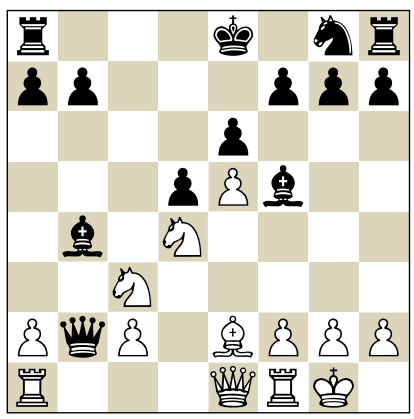
1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 ♗f5 4.♘f3 e6 5.♗e2 c5 6.♗e3 ♕b6

I was surprised when Maxime went for this line, but also very excited, because I had checked it a couple of months ago and found an interesting idea in the main line.



7.♘c3 ♘c6 8.0-0 ♕xb2 9.♕e1 cxd4 10.♗xd4 ♘xd4 11.♘xd4 ♗b4

The first time I saw this variation was in 2011, when I was playing in Reggio Emilia and witnessed first-hand the ruthless demolition of Vassily Ivanchuk at the hands of the late Vugar Gashimov.

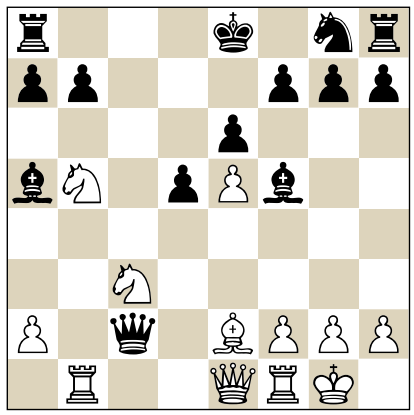


12.♘db5!?

An idea of Sergey Karjakin's. If I remember correctly, I was playing on the board next to him in a team competition when he unveiled it. Now, years later, it has been established as one of the most critical tests of 6...♕b6.

Vugar preferred to go for an endgame: 12.♖b1 ♗xc3 13.♖xb2 ♗xe1 14.♖xe1 b6 15.♗b5+ ♔f8 16.♘xf5 exf5 17.♖b3, and won an impressive game, but later improvements were found for Black.

12...♗a5 13.♖b1 ♕xc2

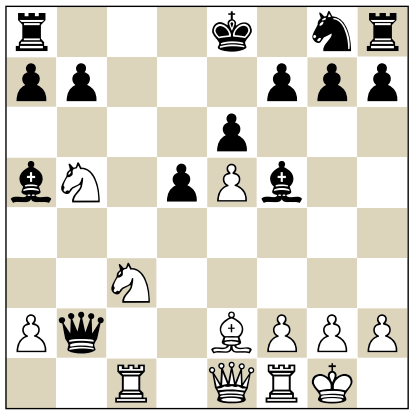


14.♖c1!

After I played this, I could already see in Maxime's eyes that he realized he was caught. Now the fun starts.

In the past I, and everyone else, preferred 14.♖b3, but it seems that Black can defend with accurate play. I was eager to test my opponent in a fresh position.

14...♕b2



15.g4!!

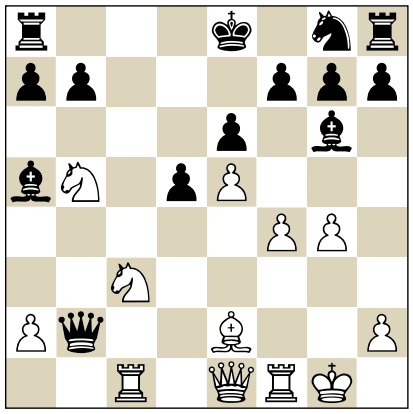
This is the real point. The computer won't show this, no matter how long you let it run, and I have to give credit to Vladimir Chuchelov for finding it.

15...♗g6

Maxime spent a lot of time over his next couple of moves. He could have played this instantly, but I understood that he was looking for subtleties in the position that weren't there. Of course, it's very difficult (not least psychologically) to play an irrational position like this when you know your opponent is fully prepared.

After 15...♗e4 I was going to play 16.f3 ♗g6 17.f4 anyway!

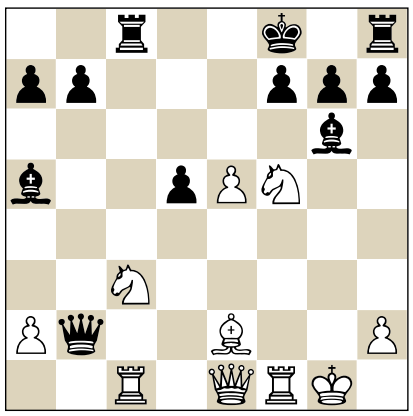
16.f4



16...♗e4

Practically speaking, this may be considered a mistake.

16...♘e7! was the easiest way, relatively speaking: 17.♘d6+ (17.f5 can be met by 17...0-0! and Black is thrilled to sacrifice a piece just to get his king to safety) 17...♔f8 18.f5 exf5 19.gxf5 ♘xf5 20.♘xf5 ♖c8.



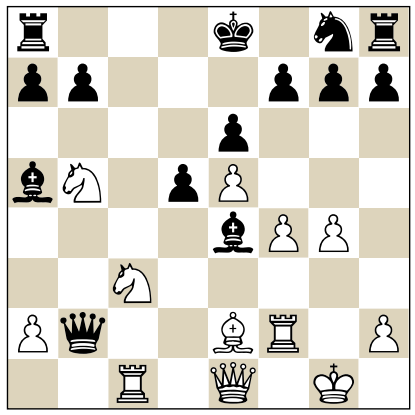
ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

Maxime told me after the game that he had calculated up to this position, so it's strange that he rejected it. He was worried about 21.♘xd5, but I had no intention of letting him off so easily! 21.♗b5! and again chaos reigns (21.♘xd5 ♕xc1 22.♕xa5 ♕c5+ 23.♕xc5+ ♖xc5 is not worse for Black). Black can probably survive with accurate play: 21...♗xf5 22.e6 f6! 23.♖xf5 ♗xc3 24.♖xc3 ♕xc3 25.e7+ ♔f7 26.e8♕+ ♖hxe8 27.♗xe8+ ♔f8 28.♕xc3 ♖xc3, and Black shouldn't lose this.

17.♖f2

It's funny, but during my home analysis I hadn't fully realized the extent of the commitment White is making when playing like this. A sacrifice of two pawns and quite often an exchange as well! It goes without saying that a mistake by either side is bound to be very costly.

> 'It's very difficult (not least psychologically) to play an irrational position like this when you know your opponent is fully prepared.'



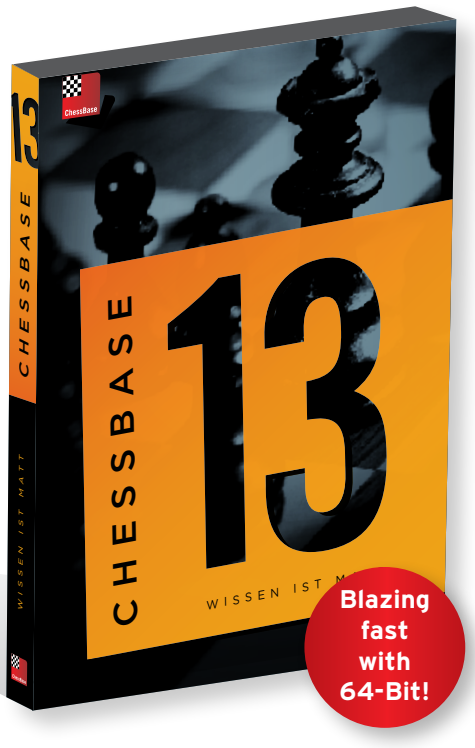
17...♘h6? And here comes the mistake! I was trying to look cool, as if I had everything figured out, but while Maxime was thinking, I was desperately calculating and trying to remember my analysis after 17...♔f8 or 17...♕b4.

The computer may be confident about Black's position, but over the board everything looks different. I don't know many people who would enjoy defending Black's position after 17...♕b4 18.♕f1 ♗b6 19.♘xe4 dxe4 20.f5.

NEW IN CHESS

Fabiano Caruana's coach Vladimir Chuchelov found the fantastic idea that helped the Italian defeat Maxime Vachier-Lagrave in a brilliant game.

CHESSBASE 13



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- Optimise the performance of your engines with analysis tasks. First of all define which positions are to be analysed one after the other. Like this your engine will over a long period of time

assemble independently and store for you in-depth analyses. For example, have your engines check an opening idea for you overnight and work things out in greater detail.

- White and Black games are like two different pairs of shoes. Therefore, logically, the improved repertoire function distinguishes between the repertoire for White and Black.

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System requirements: Minimum: Minimum: Pentium III 1 GHz, 1 GB RAM, Windows Vista, XP (Service Pack 3), DirectX9 graphics card with 256 MB RAM, DVD-ROM drive, Windows Media Player 9 and Internet access to activate the program, Playchess.com, Let's Check, Engine Cloud and updates.

Recommended: PC Intel Core i7, 2.8 GHz, 4 GB RAM, Windows 7 (64 Bit) or Windows 8 (64 Bit), DirectX10 graphics card (or compatible) with 512 MB RAM or more, 100% DirectX10 compatible sound card, Windows Media Player 11, DVD ROM drive and Internet access to activate the program, Playchess.com, Let's Check, Engine Cloud and updates.

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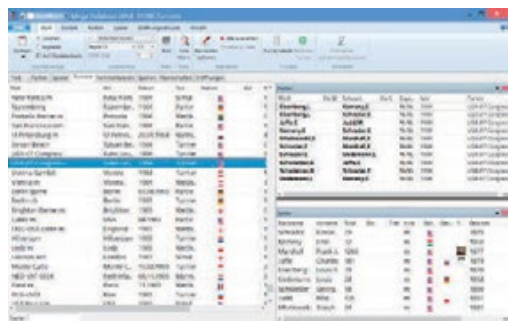

* Presumably available mid-november

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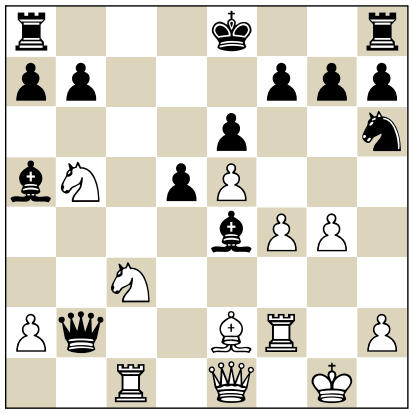
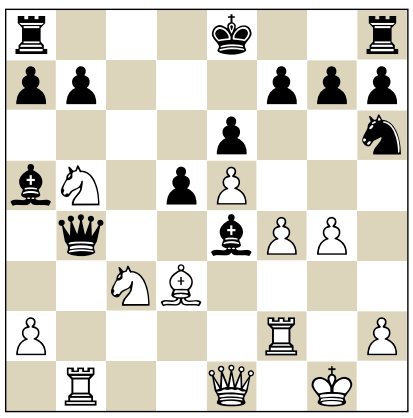
17...♔f8! is probably the best defence, but even after this things are not at all simple.



18.♗d3! I guess he was expecting the natural 18.♘c7+?, greedily going after the rook but throwing away the game: 18...♔e7, and Black is better.

18...♕b4 18...♗b6 19.♘xe4 dxe4 20.♖c2 traps the queen.

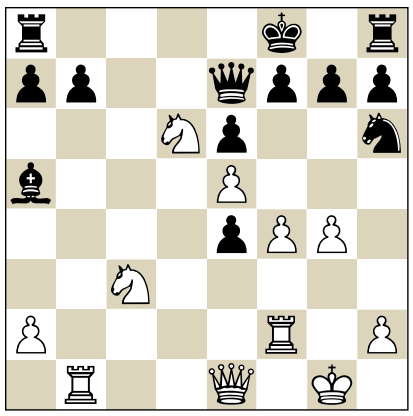
19.♖b1



19...♕c5

The clever queen sacrifice 19...♕xc3 20.♘xc3 ♗xd3 would almost work, if it weren't for 21.♕d1! ♗xb1 22.♕a4+.

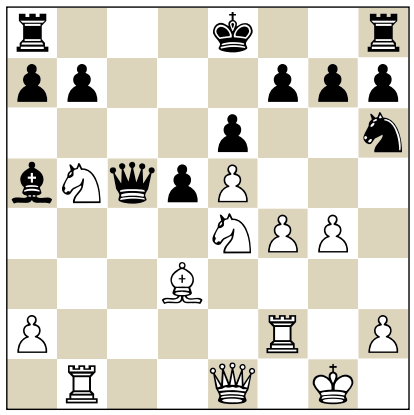
After 19...♕e7, I accurately calculated the win to the end: 20.♘d6+ ♔f8 21.♗xe4 dxe4



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

22.g5! (22.♖xb7? ♕h4 is unclear) 22...♘f5 23.♖xb7 ♕d8 24.♖xf7+ ♔g8 25.♖xf5! exf5 26.♕d1, and Black is mated. The knight on d6 is a monster.

20.♘xe4

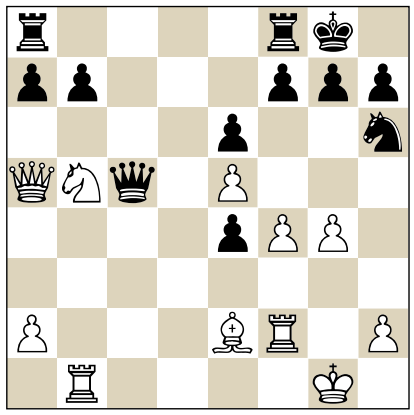


20...dxe4

20...♗xe1 doesn't help much: 21.♘bd6+ (21.♘xc5 ♗xf2+ 22.♔xf2 also wins) 21...♔f8 22.♘xc5 ♗xf2+ 23.♔xf2 b6 24.g5 (24.♘a6 ♘xg4+ 25.♔f3 h5 26.h3 ♘h6 27.♖c1 is a sadistic and effective way of strangling Black, which I was intending to play) 24...♘g4+ 25.♔g3 bxc5 26.♔xg4, with total domination because of the knight on d6. Some positional factors persist throughout the game in every variation!

21.♕xa5 0-0 22.♗e2

The smoke has cleared and I'm just up a piece for nothing. The rest is simple.



22...e3

Or 22...a6 23.♕c7 and wins.

23.♖ff1 ♖fc8 24.♕e1 ♕d5 25.♖b2 f6 26.♕g3 fxe5 27.fxe5 ♖f8 28.♖xf8+ ♖xf8 29.♕xe3 ♘f7 30.♘c3

Black resigned.

NOTES BY
Fabiano Caruana

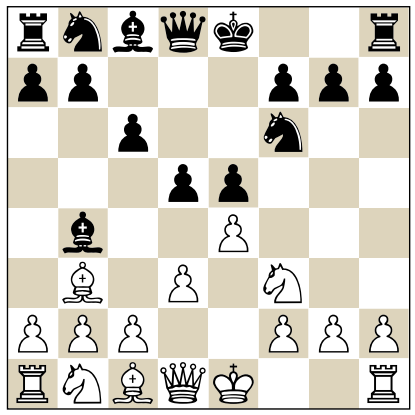
IG 4.16 – C24
Magnus Carlsen
Fabiano Caruana
St.Louis 2014 (3)

1.e4 e5 2.♗c4

Already a surprise!

2...♘f6 3.d3 c6 4.♘f3 d5 5.♗b3 ♗b4+

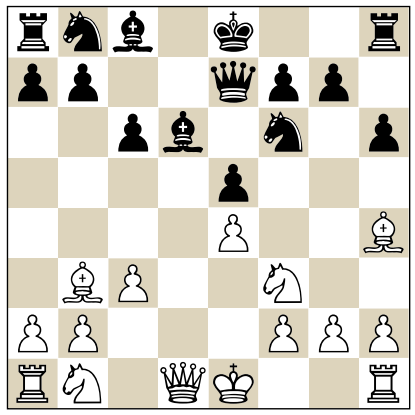
Modern theory suggests this subtle move, provoking c3. It may be the best.



6.c3

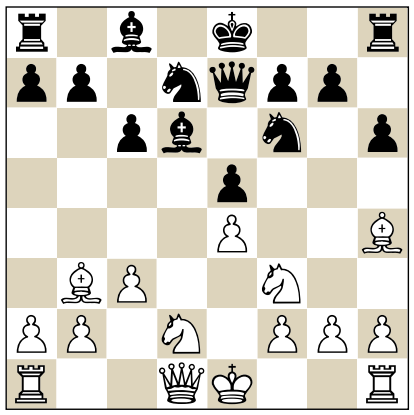
6.♗d2 is the move the gods of chess (correspondence players) usually prefer. I would listen to them!

6...♗d6 7.♗g5 dxe4 8.dxe4 h6 9.♗h4 ♕e7



Although Magnus was playing relatively quickly, I couldn't understand the point behind his play. I felt I had effortlessly achieved a very comfortable position. The bishop on h4 is misplaced.

10.♘bd2 ♘bd7

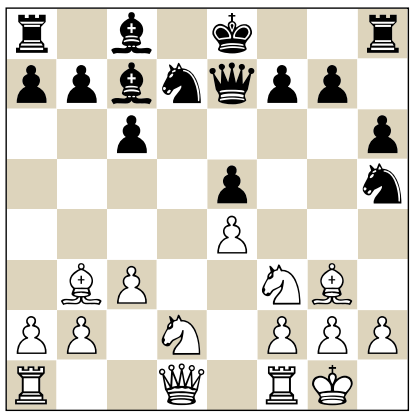


11.♗g3

This move was unanimously criticized after the game, but it's difficult to suggest an alternative.

11...♗c7 12.0-0 ♘h5

I think Magnus was under the impression that this could be met by ♘xe5. Now I gain the bishop pair for free and secure a clear advantage.

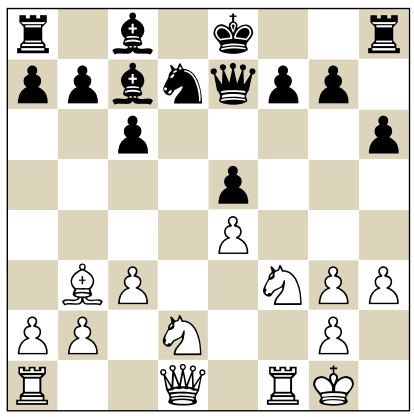


13.h3

Indeed, 13.♘xe5?? is not possible, as after 13...♘xe5 14.♕xh5 ♗g4 15.♕h4, 15...g5 traps the queen!

13.♘h4!? was probably a more accurate way of implementing the same idea: 13...♘xg3 (13...♘df6 14.♘f5 ♗xf5 15.exf5 ♘xg3 16.hxg3, and if White can gain control over e4, he should be fine) 14.fxg3 ♘f6 15.h3, and although Black has a certain advantage, White has his share of dynamic possibilities.

13...♘xg3 14.fxg3



14...♘c5!?

A provocative move. There were safer ways to continue, but I was already playing for the maximum.

15.♗xf7+ Naturally, Magnus was looking for the first chance to change the course of play.

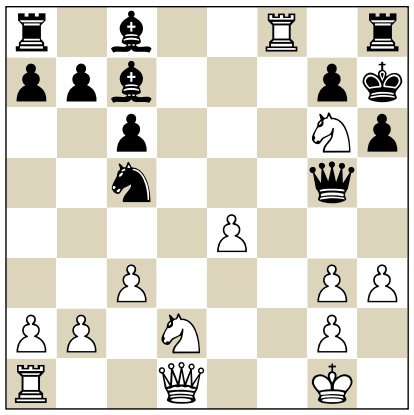
After 15.♗c2 a5, White's bishop has been forced into a passive position.

15...♔xf7 16.♘xe5+ ♔g8 17.♘g6

> 'Naturally, Magnus was looking for the first chance to change the course of play.'

♕g5 18.♖f8+ ♔h7

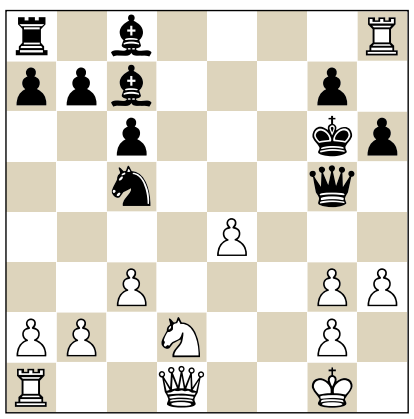
After a forced sequence, White is faced with a big choice: to capture on h8 with the rook or with the knight. Magnus fell into deep thought, and chose correctly:



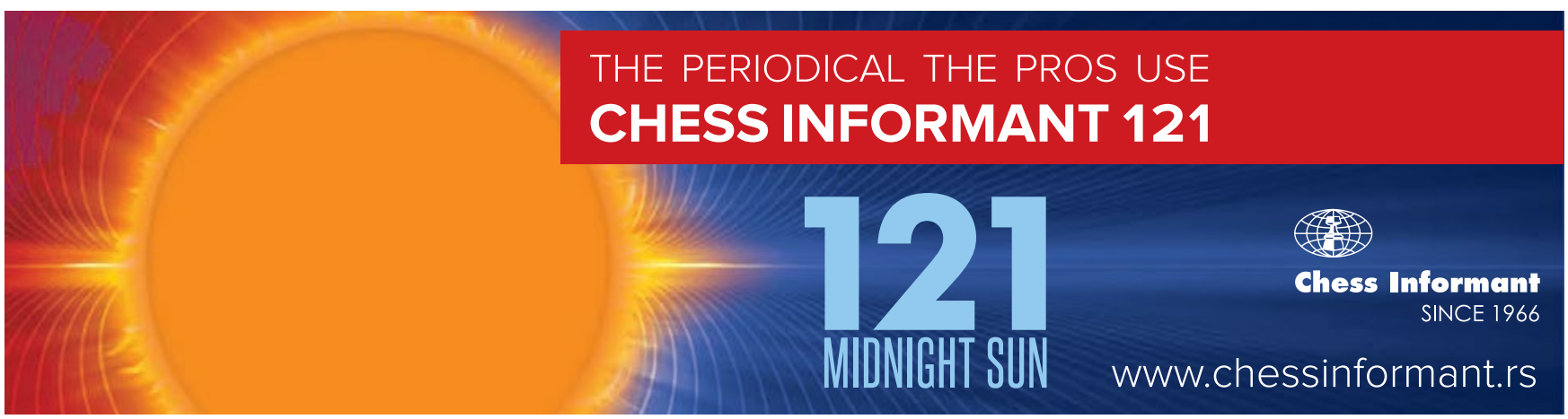
19.♘xh8

At first, I was under the impression that this move would allow me a crudely winning attack, but after more than half an hour of contemplation, I couldn't find anything clear-cut.

I was expecting 19.♖xh8+ ♔xg6, and didn't see an adequate defence for White:

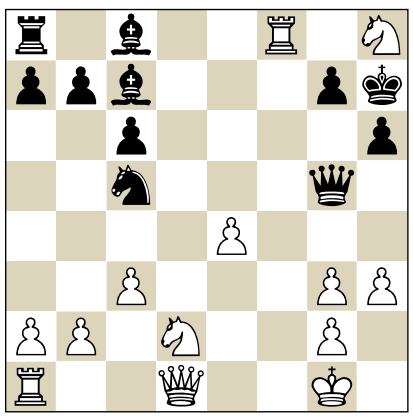


ANALYSIS DIAGRAM



Grim and determined faces at the start of the game that would end a historic streak. Caruana's win in the first game against Magnus Carlsen fed the general feeling that the Italian may well be the biggest threat to the Norwegian's domination.

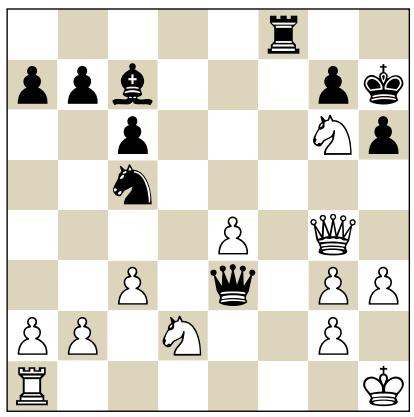
20.♘f3 (20.♘f1? ♗g4 wins on the spot. This was a crucial trick to spot in advance) 20...♕xg3 21.♕c2, and again White gets hit with the already familiar shot: 21...♗g4! and Black should win.



19...♗g4

Here, 19...♗xh3 20.♖xa8 ♕e3+ 21.♔f1 ♗xg2+ 22.♔xg2 ♕xg3+ 23.♔f1 was the first thing I considered. I have a draw in hand, but unfortunately not more: 23...♕h3+ 24.♔e2, and Black has nothing better than perpetual.

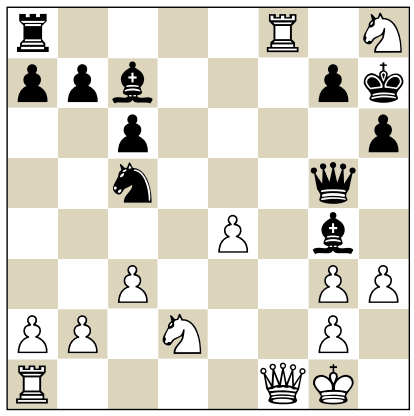
I also looked at 19...♕e3+ 20.♔h1 ♗g4 21.♕xg4 ♖xf8 22.♘g6 and stopped my calculation here, seeing that White is not losing material.



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

Nevertheless, Black retains winning chances with accurate play: 22...♖f7 (22...♖f6 23.♘f1) 23.♘f1 ♕g5! 24.♘h4 ♕xg4 25.hxg4 ♘xe4 26.♔h2 ♖f2, and White faces a long fight for survival.

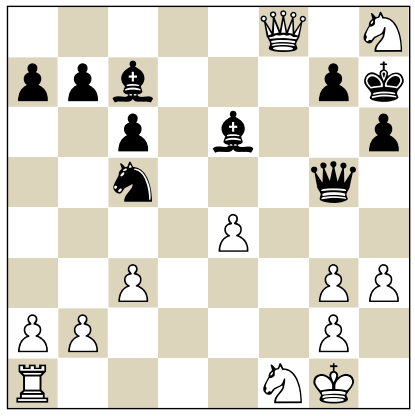
20.♕f1



20...♘d3!?

This spectacular move, which leaves nearly all the pieces on the board hanging, was the result of my long think on move 19. Impressive though it may look, it's not clear if it was the best chance to win.

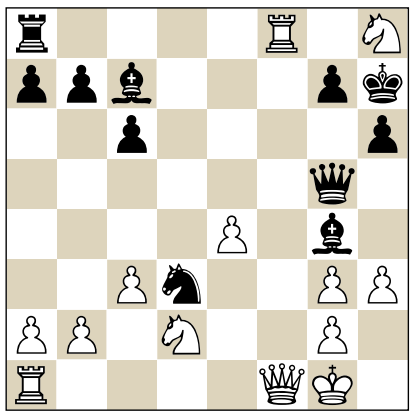
There's also 20...♖xf8 21.♕xf8 ♗e6 (21...♕xd2 was the simplest solution: 22.hxg4 ♘d7! – this backwards move escaped my attention – 23.♕f3 ♘e5 24.♕f5+ ♔xh8, with a pleasant advantage, although it won't be easy to win) 22.♘f1



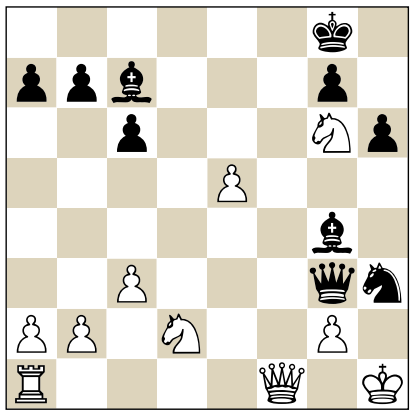
ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

and now with 22...♕d8 (or 22...♕f6) 23.♕xd8 ♗xd8, I will finally pick up the paratrooper on h8 and emerge with a clear advantage in the end-

ing. In general, I was too focused on attacking and forgot that I can quietly trade queens and win a piece.



21.♕xd3 21.♖xa8? loses trivially: 21...♕e3+ 22.♔h1 ♘f2+ (22...♕xg3 also wins, but why complicate things?) 23.♕xf2 ♕xf2 24.hxg4 ♕xd2, and White will probably have to sacrifice everything to avoid getting mated.
21.♘g6!? is an even more spectacular move which I saw during the game but didn't take seriously enough. As it turns out, it was a very good defensive chance: 21...♕e3+ 22.♔h1 ♕xg3 23.e5 ♖xf8 24.♘xf8+ ♔g8 25.♘g6 ♘f2+ 26.♔g1 ♘xh3+ 27.♔h1

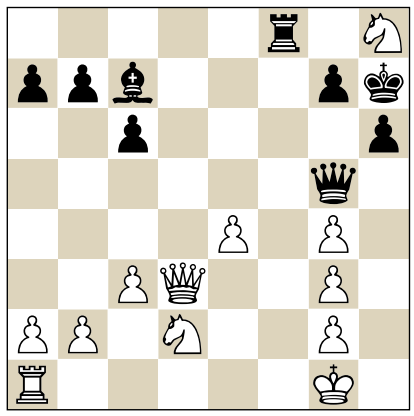


ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

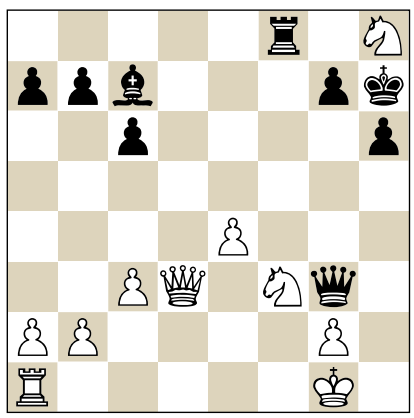
27...♘f2+ 28.♔g1 ♗e6 29.♘e7+ ♔h8 30.♘g6+ ♕xg6 31.♔xf2, and after a long (and apparently forced!) sequence, Black has wound up down an exchange, with a tremendous initiative to show for it. With accurate defence, White will probably be able to defend.

21...♖xf8 22.hxg4

The knight on h8 is dead, and White's tripled pawns make a comical impression, so it's very likely that material equality will be restored in short order. Black of course has a clear advantage due to White's weak king, but the passed e-pawn is a powerful trump. Magnus immediately starts to work on advancing it.



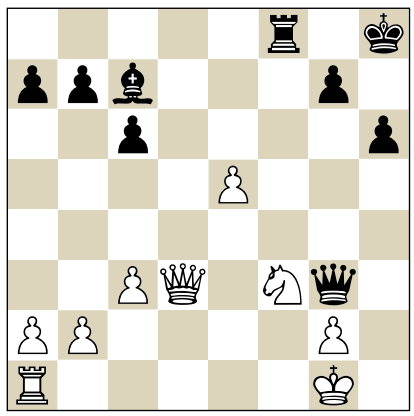
22...♕xg4 23.♘f3 ♕xg3 Maybe not the most accurate. 23...♔xh8 24.e5 ♕xg3 would transpose to the game, while avoiding 24.♘f7.



24.e5+?

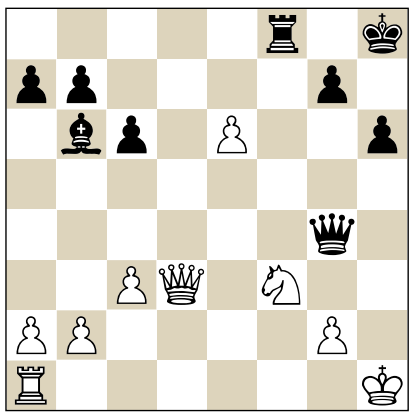
I'm very surprised that Magnus missed his chance to play 24.♘f7!, a move which concerned me during the game, because I felt that I had squandered much of my advantage. I was planning on playing 24...♖xf7 25.e5+ ♕g6 26.♕xg6+ ♔xg6, with a slight edge in the ending, but hardly enough to win against accurate defence.

24...♔xh8



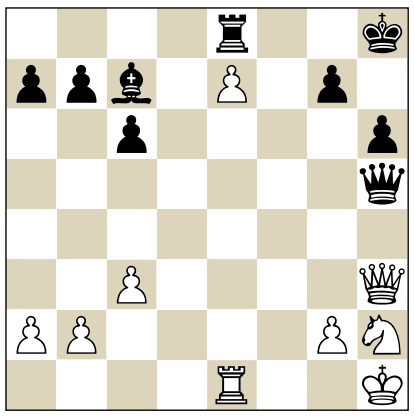
25.e6?! This pawn will be difficult to maintain.
The machine suggests 25.♖f1!, which looks odd but is really a very clever idea. White is overprotecting the knight on f3 and preparing to meet ♖f4 by ♕d7: 25...♗b6+ (25...♗xe5 26.♘xe5 ♖xf1+ 27.♕xf1 ♕xe5 28.♕f7 will probably end in a draw by perpetual) 26.♔h1 ♖f4 27.♕d7! covers h3 and defends against ♖h4.

25...♗b6+ 26.♔h1 ♕g4



27.♕d6!?

A great move! I only considered 27.e7 and thought I would easily win the pawn, but this move threw me into a panic! Suddenly I got low on time and couldn't see a clear way to cement my advantage.
In case of 27.e7 ♖e8 28.♖e1 ♕h5+ 29.♘h2 ♗c7 30.♕h3



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

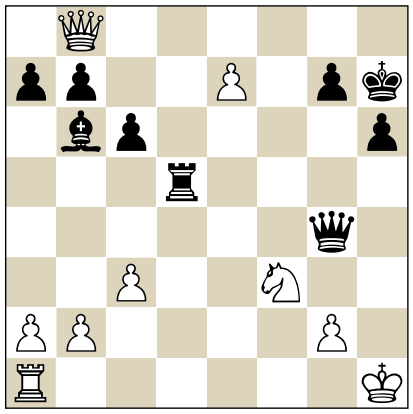
30...♕xh3 31.gxh3 ♔g8, rounding up the e-pawn, was the end of my calculation. In fact, even stronger was the beautiful 30...♖xe7!.

27...♖d8!

Thankfully, I managed to find a very nice idea to win the game!

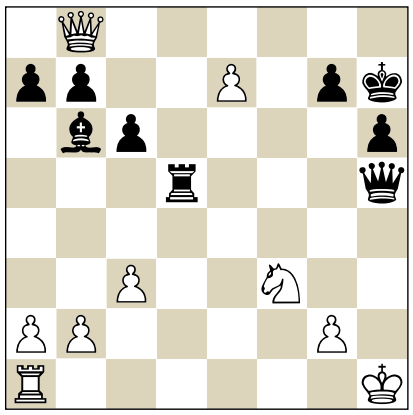
28.♕e5 ♖d5 29.♕b8+ ♔h7

30.e7 At first this had seemed extremely worrisome, but then I noticed the following:



30...♕h5+

30...♖h5+?? 31.♘h2 would be an unfortunate turnaround.



31.♘h2??

A bizarre blunder. Magnus was obviously under a lot of pressure and probably hallucinated something. At least he could have kept the game going with 31.♕h2, although his chances of survival were slim.

After 31.♕h2, 31...♕e8! was what I had seen on move 27. Now the pawn finally falls: 32.♖e1 (32.g4!? is the last chance to keep the game going, but down a pawn and with a weak king White won't be able to hold on) 32...♗f2! and next ...♖h5 or ...♖d1 wins.

31...♖d1+ 32.♖xd1 ♕xd1+ 33.♘f1 ♕xf1+ 34.♔h2 ♕g1+

White resigned.

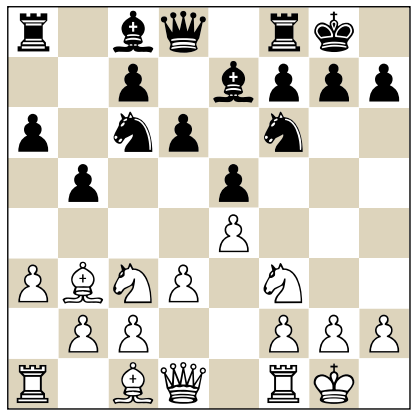
Magnus and I have been trading blows for some time, but after losing 2 in a row against him (at the Rapid World Championship in Dubai and the Olympiad in Tromsø – ed.) I was very happy to get this win in.

NOTES BY
Fabiano Caruana

RL 13.5 – C84
Fabiano Caruana
Levon Aronian
St Louis 2014 (4)

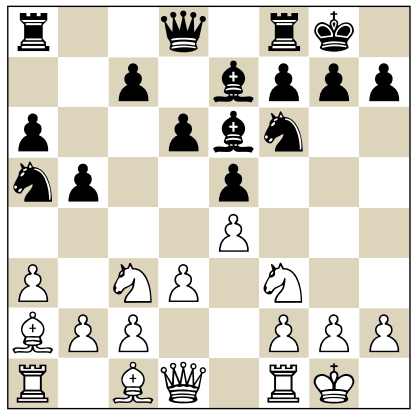
1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 a6 4.♗a4 ♘f6 5.0-0 ♗e7 6.d3 b5 7.♗b3 0-0 8.♘c3 d6 9.a3

This line was first played at the top level by Anand, and since then there has been an explosion of interest. I have also faced it from the black side.



9...♘a5 10.♗a2 ♗e6

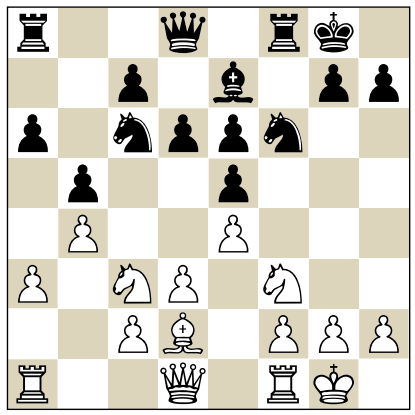
Levon had already played this line before, winning a nice game against Dominguez.



11.♗xe6

Today, a move like this is seen as ordinary, but a decade ago it would surely have raised a few eyebrows. In the Anti-Marshall with h3, Black often would take a few moves to reroute the bishop from b7-c8-e6, just to achieve this exchange. Now, of course, you can't even dream that a Marshall player won't take the first opportunity to play ... d5, so you have to content yourself with the same structure a couple tempi down. Theory develops inexorably towards equality!

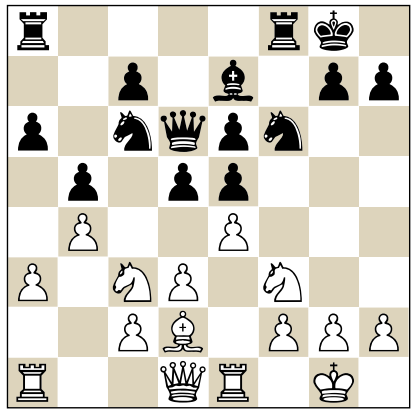
11...fxe6 12.b4 ♘c6 13.♗d2



13...d5

I had thoroughly checked this a year ago, and was even intending to play it with Black, but Karjakin got the first chance, winning a game... again against Dominguez.

14.♖e1 ♕d6



15.♘a2!?

This is the new idea. It looks very odd, but I'm just anticipating ...d4 and getting my knight out of the way. In an ideal world, it will manoeuvre to b3, perfectly placed to stifle Black's queenside play.

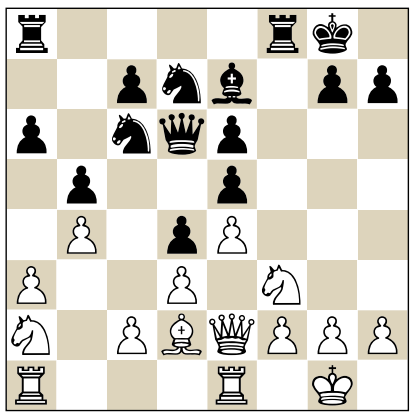
15...♘d7

Black could consider 15...dxe4!? 16.dxe4 ♘d4 17.♘xd4 ♕xd4, which the computer evaluates as equal, but it looks pretty strategically risky to me.

16.♕e2 d4

This came as a surprise. I didn't expect Levon to commit to a set-up so soon, as he is now committed to creating counterplay on the queenside. If he doesn't, the weakness of the

e-pawns and the rigidity of his structure will tell.

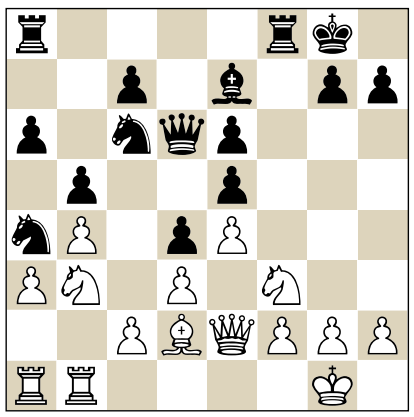


17.♖eb1! A good move, taking measures against ...a5.

17...♘b6 The knight will look very attractive on a4, but I'm not sure this was best. 17...a5 18.bxa5 ♘xa5 19.♖xb5 ♕xa3 is playable, but White keeps a certain advantage: 20.♖bb1 ♘c6 21.♕d1 ♕c5 22.♘c1, and an unpleasant defensive task awaits.

17...♖fb8!? was my main worry, renewing the threat of ...a5, when 18.♕e1 was my intention, but then I wasn't entirely sure how to continue after 18...♘d8!?, preparing ...c5. Play might continue 19.♘c1 c5 20.bxc5 ♘xc5 21.♘b3, and although Black has succeeded in creating counterplay on the queenside, White is still a bit more comfortable.

18.♘c1 ♘a4 19.♘b3

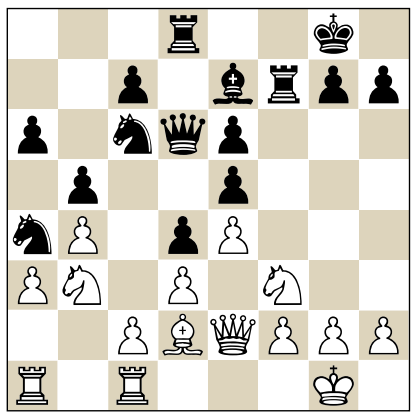


19...♖f7

19...♘c3!? was an interesting try. Levon was pretty adamant after the game that this was the correct way to continue. Still, White keeps a slight advantage: 20.♗xc3 dxc3 21.♖d1 ♘d4 22.♘fxd4 exd4 23.e5 ♕d5 24.♕e4 ♖ad8 25.♖e1, and after ...c5, White can safely capture and play a4, cementing the light-square blockade.

> 'This sacrifice is a no-brainer. I have two pawns and a ferocious initiative for the piece, while Black lacks any coordination.'

20.♖c1 ♖d8 Black has to keep an eye on d3, as otherwise White will open the position with c3.

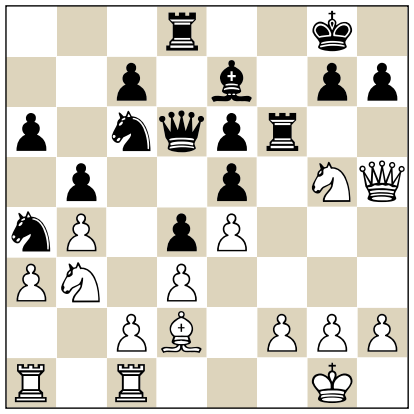


21.♘g5!?

I didn't see a clear way to make progress, so I offered my opponent the chance to radically change the position by trading a pair of pieces.

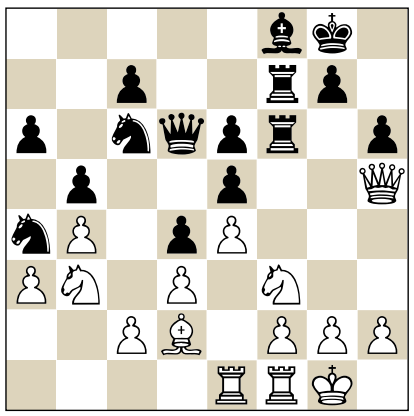
21...♖f6 Naturally, Levon didn't feel comfortable giving up the defender of his dark squares: 21...♗xg5 22.♗xg5 ♖df8 23.♖f1, and it seems to me that White will slowly prepare c3 with ♗d2 and ♖ac1 or play on the kingside with g3, ♔g2, h4-h5. In any case, Black's position is unpleasant.

22.♕h5 Now my queen will be very annoying on h5, putting constant pressure on e5.



22...h6 23.♘f3 ♖df8 24.♖f1 Getting f2 under control. I didn't want to take any chances.

24...♖8f7 25.♖ae1 ♗f8



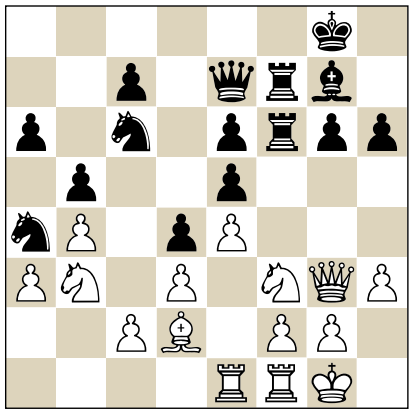
26.h3 Now my knight is coming to g4 via h2.

I could even play more ambitiously with 26.h4!? and next ♕g4 and h5.

26...g6 27.♕h4 ♕e7 28.♕g3 ♗g7 One of the critical moments in the game. I could, of course, continue my plan with ♘h2, but I was worried he would sacrifice an exchange with ...♖f4 and the situation would become murky. I decided I would rather impose my will on him!

St.Louis 2014 — **cat. XXIII**

				1	2	3	4	5	6		TPR
1	Fabiano Caruana	IGM ITA	2801	* *	1 ½	1 1	1 1	1 ½	1 ½	8½	3097
2	Magnus Carlsen	IGM NOR	2877	0 ½	* *	½ ½	½ ½	1 ½	½ 1	5½	2822
3	Veselin Topalov	IGM BUL	2772	0 0	½ ½	* *	1 ½	0 ½	1 1	5	2808
4	Maxime Vachier-Lagrave	IGM FRA	2768	0 0	½ ½	0 ½	* *	1 ½	½ ½	4	2736
5	Levon Aronian	IGM ARM	2805	0 ½	0 ½	1 ½	0 ½	* *	½ ½	4	2729
6	Hikaru Nakamura	IGM USA	2787	0 ½	½ 0	0 0	½ ½	½ ½	* *	3	2656



29.♘a5!

29.♘h2 ♔h7 30.♘g4 ♖f4! 31.♗xf4 exf4 32.♕f3 e5 looks unclear to me. I think Levon would have been very pleased to achieve a position like this.

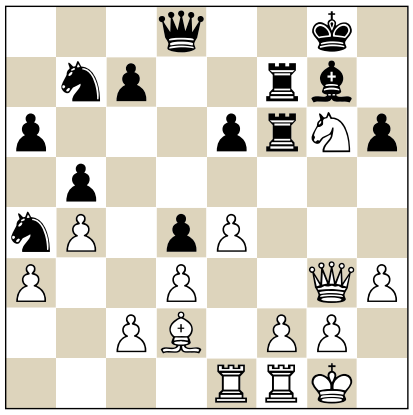
29...♘xa5 30.♘xe5

30.bxa5 ♖xf3 31.gxf3 might also be good, but I don't feel comfortable letting my pawns get wrecked like this.

30...♘b7 31.♘xg6

This sacrifice is a no-brainer. I have two pawns and a ferocious initiative for the piece, while Black lacks any coordination.

31...♕d8



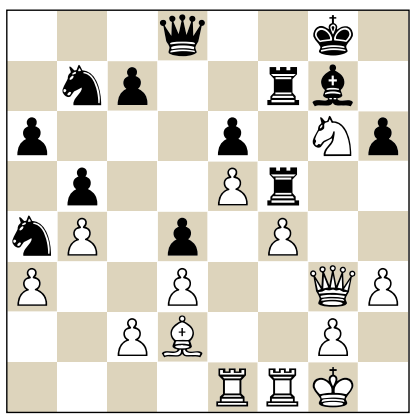
32.e5

Very positional, choking the knight on b7, but not necessarily correct.

My first intention was 32.♘e5 ♖f8 33.♘g4 ♖g6 34.♗xh6, winning a pawn but allowing Black a bit of freedom for his pieces. In any case, this was the most straightforward and simple path to an advantage.

32.f4!? may have been the strongest option. I missed that after 32...♔h7 I don't retreat to e5 but instead go 33.♘h4! and the following play is forced: 33...e5 34.fxe5 ♖xf1+ 35.♖xf1 ♖xf1+ 36.♔xf1 ♕e8 37.♘f5 ♕xe5 38.♗f4 ♕f6 39.♗xc7, and Black is also likely to lose his d4-pawn.

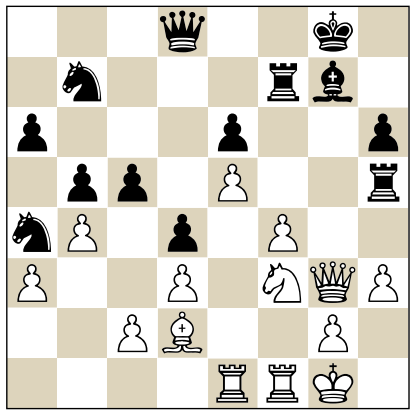
32...♖f5 33.f4



33...c5? A superficial move. Black is a long way from developing counterplay on the queenside.

Black had to get the knight into play: 33...♘c3! 34.♘h4 (I realized in time that 34.♕f3 c5 35.g4 is met by 35...♖g5! and Black might be better! Oops!) 34...♖h5 35.♘f3 ♖hf5 36.♕g6 ♘d5! – and that's the point behind ♘c3. Black is just in time to put pressure on f4.

34.♘h4 ♖h5 35.♘f3



35...♔h7? This makes it very easy. After 35...♖hf5 36.♕g6 Black doesn't have ...♘d5, and he will lose material after 36...♕d7 (or 36...♕e7 37.bxc5) 37.♘h4.

35...♖f8 may have been the best defence, but it wouldn't have helped much: 36.bxc5 ♘bxc5 37.♕g6 ♕e8 38.♕xe8 ♖xe8 39.♘xd4, and beside the fact that Black has lost another pawn, he still suffers from a rook trapped at the edge of the board.

36.♕g4 ♖hf5

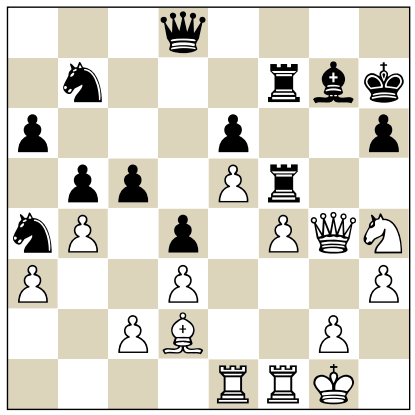
36...♖ff5 loses to 37.♘g5+.

37.♘h4 And now 38.♕g6 is a threat.

NEW IN CHESS

One loss, one draw and a lost bet. Levon Aronian remains good-humoured as he pays Fabiano Caruana one dollar for rightly predicting Magnus Carlsen's decision to sign the World Championship contract.

The game is essentially over, and the rest was easy.



37...♔h8 38.♘xf5 ♖xf5 39.♕g6 ♕e7 40.g4 ♖f8 41.f5 ♕e8 42.♕xe8 ♖xe8 43.f6 ♗f8 44.f7 ♖e7 45.♖f6 ♘b6 46.♗xh6 ♘d7 47.♖ef1 cxb4 48.axb4 ♗xh6 49.♖xh6+ ♔g7 50.♖h5

Black resigned. ■

Interview Fabiano Caruana

‘I thought I had my chances, but nothing can prepare you for 7-0.’

Dirk Jan ten Geuzendam

The day after. Fabiano Caruana walks into the stately reception hall of the Chase Park Plaza Hotel, a robust monument of early 20th-century American architecture. He’s been out late and has been drinking ‘a little bit’. To my query of whether it was worth it, he has a rational answer: ‘The next day you can never ask the question, it’s never worth it. That’s my thought at least.’ Then he has a question for me: do you have an aspirin? I do and he gratefully takes it. Whether he is really feeling unwell is hard to tell. As we get to talk, he is lively and focused. And he is in a good mood, obviously. Not only because of his result, but also because he’s just won four bets. Magnus Carlsen has signed the contract for the match against Anand and that’s what he had bet on with Rex Sinquefield, Jennifer Shahade, Levon Aronian and his girlfriend Arianne Caoili. The gain is a grand total of four dollars, but he is pleased that he had predicted Carlsen’s decision. He explains his reasoning: ‘I didn’t see an alternative for him. Let’s say, he doesn’t play, he’s not going to be official World Champion. People will still consider him the strongest player in the world, but he won’t have the title and he is not going to come back into the cycle. It would be ridiculous to play the Candidates’ after declining the match. His only alternatives would be to either ignore just everything and says rating is the only important thing, or to find someone to organize a breakaway from FIDE. To organize his own world championship cycle, which is of course very difficult. From what I understand, he needed clarification from the Norwegian gov-

ernment to see if he can even play the match. I guess he got that. In any case, I think it's the correct decision.'

He sits calmly and I suggest we speak about his historic performance, and ask if he is really as calm as he looks or whether he feels a special kind of happiness.

'Well, yeah, the result is very different from everything I've ever done. Every time I was thinking, now is the day that it's going to end, but I somehow kept on winning. We were satisfied about the result during the event. Pretty much unprecedented, the way I was playing.'

Did you have extra confidence after your win in Dortmund?

'No, I didn't. First of all, because I played the Olympiad, which was pretty shaky, although I didn't lose rating. I lost to Magnus, the first time I lost to him as White. I was totally losing in the last round; I only saved it by a miracle. So the Olympiad was not really confidence boosting. And I was sick before the event. A bit under the weather. I came here a couple of days in advance, just to recover from jetlag. I think I was the first one of all the players to arrive in St. Louis. I went to the chess club, met everyone, had dinner with Rex and Jeanne, and Yasser, Maurice and Jennifer, and I felt pretty comfortable. My physical form was definitely not as good as it could have been. Actually, I only started feeling better after I stopped winning. Right around the time of my game against Magnus. Before that I had a bit of a cold throughout the event. It wasn't anything major and I still had a lot of energy. I can't say I was confident, but I definitely didn't feel bad. I thought I had my chances. But in any case, nothing can prepare you for (hesitates briefly) 7-0 (laughs).'

You started with an excellent win against Topalov.

'During the game I didn't even realize that I played well. I wasn't so sure about the position, because it was a bit unusual, and when he played g4, he actually kind of shocked me. But

The glorious winner of the 2014 Sinquefield Cup. 'Pretty much unprecedented, the way I was playing.'

in fact I was pretty objective during the game. I was never worse and I never made any real mistakes. I think it was like that throughout the tournament. Well, seven rounds and maybe the last game. I wasn't doing anything special, but I was playing normal moves, not making real mistakes and I was never in any real danger in any of the games – which is unusual, because normally you have at least one weak moment when you have a terrible position and lose the game. Or even if you don't lose the game, you will have at least one weak moment. In this tournament everything worked out, from start to finish.'

Was there a moment that you thought, I could have had 9 out of 9?
'Just after this game against Nakamura, because this was a bit too much. I understand that the position against Carlsen was very unclear, very unusual, and it's possible to get a little confused. I think he even mentioned that he had expected ♖cd1 instead of ♖fd1. We probably had the same strange delusions about the position. That can happen... If you look at it objectively, ♖fd1 is not a difficult move. You just have to calculate pretty simply that bishop takes h4 doesn't work. And you have to see this bishop takes c5 idea in case of ♗e7. After you see that, ♖fd1 is screaming to be played.'

You did win your second game, against Maxime Vachier-Lagrave.
'That was a very straightforward game. I just had my preparation from the opening. I can't take credit for the idea; it was Vladimir's (Chuchelov), this ♖c1, g4, f4. It's actually a brilliant idea, really fantastic. The computer doesn't show it, even if you let it run for hours; it never mentions it. And even if you push it, it doesn't fully appreciate it.'

Is this a moment that gives you happiness? You're sitting there and you are allowed to play a prepared idea.
'It's not so easy, because I was worried that I'd forgotten everything. I couldn't remember all the details. I was trying to figure out over the board what would happen if he went there or there. I actually sacrificed two pawns, totally opening my kingside. If I didn't play the right moves, I could just lose, like an idiot. But I was trying to give him the impression that I remembered everything, that I knew everything. I played quickly and got up from the board, just trying to remember what was going on.'

> 'After five games I was quite confident that even I wouldn't be able to screw this up.'

Your third win was a big one, against the World Champion.
'Yes, of course, that was one of the highlights of the tournament. It's not every day that you can beat Magnus with black. Everything went well from the start. Magnus played with little confidence; I got a very comfortable position. That provoked some complications, which maybe wasn't necessary, but it turned out that I played well. I evaluated the position objectively, I was never in danger, although he probably had many far better defensive options, but I could tell over the board that he was not very happy with how the game was going and it showed in his play.'

It looks like you've got his number.
'I wouldn't say that. We're trading blows. He beat me at the Olympiad, I beat him in Shamkir, he beat me in Shamkir, I beat him in the Tal Memorial last year, he beat me here last year. For the moment it's very closely contested, I would say. He's plus one, but this goes back many years and I would say that recently it's been very close between us.'

When you're looking at the top of the world rankings, do you see him as your main rival?
'(Laughs) I don't know. Maybe you should ask it the opposite way and ask him if he sees me as his main rival. For the moment Vishy is his main rival. But in the future, maybe, I think I do have a chance to qualify for a match. I don't know if I have a better chance than other people, but I do have a chance.'

After your third win people inevitably started to talk about tournament victory. How did you deal with that?
'It was still too early to say anything. I was in the lead by one and a half points at that time, which is a huge lead, but you lose one game and it turns into half a point. I wasn't thinking about winning the tournament till... well, after Round 7 everything became totally clear. But after five games I was quite confident that even I wouldn't be able to screw this up. It would be quite typical, but I'd really have to go beyond my limits (laughs).'

In Round 4 you won again, this time against Aronian.
'This was probably my best game of the tournament. A small idea in the opening. It wasn't like the idea I had against Maxime. I just got a position, maybe with a slight advantage but it was still very unclear and there was a lot more to be done. I mean, I wasn't gifted the game from the start from preparation. But still I got a slight advantage and gradually increased it throughout the course of the game and then, when I had a chance to sacrifice a piece, I did it fairly quickly; I played the game at a good pace. I would say it was my best achievement in terms of all-round play. It was a high-level game.'

By now your self-confidence must have been considerable, and the thought of trying to finish the first half with a perfect score must have occurred to you.
'No, I wasn't really thinking that. I was playing Hikaru with black. Traditionally, I don't have a very good score against him, but I wasn't very worried. I decided to stay away from the Grünfeld, not because I was afraid of any prepara-

tion, but just to get him out of his comfort zone. He probably had some idea of what to do there, and everyone's always a bit less comfortable when they don't get their position from the opening. We got a more or less equal position, but I misplayed it at some point and got slightly worse. But I felt that he was a bit overconfident at some point. He probably felt that he was outplaying me, but I didn't think that I was so much worse and he really misjudged the position in the middlegame. At some point I realized my position was very safe, but he kept on pressing, playing quickly, and going for a very dubious position, strategically. I was feeling very good in general. I decided not to shy away from a real fight, and when he gave me chances, I took them.'

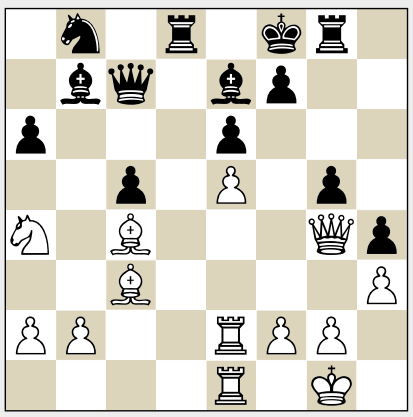
You were still not feeling one hundred per cent fit. Is that something that may help? It reminds me of Simen Agdestein in Norway Chess. He was suffering all through the tournament and played well until he started feeling better, and then he lost two games.
'Alex Chernin once told me that if you're sick, it's not really dangerous in terms of your chess playing. But after you get better, you suddenly start feeling very tired. Whereas when you're sick, you're kind of vigilant, you're on edge. I got sick at the European Individual Championship in 2009, and I wasn't playing so badly. But when I got better, I collapsed and played absolutely awfully and lost 17 points or maybe more. But here I didn't collapse. Missing these two chances in Rounds 8 and 9 wasn't collapsing.'

When the rest day came, was it welcome, or would you have preferred to play on?
'No, I was happy to have it. First of all, I wanted to get my thoughts in order, because 5-0 was beyond any expectations I could possibly have had. I had to think about how to approach the rest of the tournament. We discussed it and I took it as if it was a new tournament, as if I hadn't played the previous five games. I was ready to play another five-game tournament.'

Could you play the sixth game without thinking of Fischer's 6-0?
'Uh, I didn't really think about it (with an apologetic laugh). It was a bit different; he was playing matches.'

But nobody cares that it was a bit different; it's just this magic sound.
'Yeah, I understand that people were very excited about the result, even more so after 7-0. I was also excited, but I think I managed to approach my games the best way I could, which was not to think about the previous results. Because unfortunately when you get into a bad position, your opponent stops caring what you did in the past and starts beating you.'

Game 6, White against Topalov, was another well-played game. You must have been happy with that one.
'Yeah, I was surprised that it was so easy. I played a new idea in the opening. Not a killing idea, more like my idea against Lev. I had a slight advantage, maybe even more, but I wasn't totally winning. I had more time. At some point it started getting a bit unclear. But I saw this idea of ♖e3 and was very surprised when he ran straight into the sacrifice. He didn't have to. He wasn't losing. There was still a lot of fight in the position.'



Caruana-Topalov
St. Louis 2014 (6)
position after 22...♘b8

23.♖e3! A nice attacking idea. **23...♘c6** Misses or misjudges White's plan. The only way to stay in the game was 23...♗d5. **24.♗xe6! fxe6 25.♖f3+ ♔e8 26.♕xe6** White simply has too many threats. The Black position quickly falls apart. **26...♖g7 27.♕h6 ♘d4 28.e6! ♘xf3+ 29.gxf3 ♗f8 30.♕h5+ ♔e7 31.♗xg7** Black resigned.

Now it's 6-0 and you want to break Fischer's 6-0. I mean, any normal person would...
'(Laughs) No, again. I wasn't thinking about that. I was kind of expecting that at some point it was going to end and I wanted it to end with a draw and not a loss. Don't do anything stupid. I approached my game against Maxime very solidly. I played the Queen's Gambit Declined. I avoided the Grünfeld, as I had done a couple of more times during the tournament. I just wanted to keep on surprising my opponents. The position from the opening was normal, more or less equal, maybe even a tiny bit better for him. But he started playing very strangely and went ♕a4, and I immediately grabbed the initiative. I could tell that he was very nervous.'

You were on a roll; that may have had an impact?
'They were probably thinking about it, but this thinking doesn't affect me. A strong player shouldn't care what his opponent has done. In the back of their minds there is probably some thought like: I don't want to be the seventh one! (laughs). Then when you start to play inaccurately, it starts with ♕a4, and you get ♕h4, even if it's not tragic for him yet, you already start getting that feeling, oh, it's happening. Maybe you should ask them how they feel, because I try not to think about how my opponents feel too much. But if they're not feeling well, I am happy about that (laughs).'

You learned that from Magnus.
'Yeah, OK, I am just trying to maximize my results. If I have a psychological edge because of my previous wins, then I think that's great.'

People may not expect that from you. To the outside world you look modest, close to shy. But there must be this burning desire to win inside.

'Yeah, I am not a very competitive person in general. If I play any kind of sport, I do not really care if I win or lose. Like tennis, I couldn't care less; I just play to enjoy it. But in terms of chess I am very competitive and I want to win, just as much as anyone else. Maybe even more.'

Why is it that chess brings this out in you?
'Well, it's probably the only thing I am good at (with a faint smile). And I think I am pretty good at it. So I feel that I should prove myself. If I have the ability.'

It makes you feel good when you win?
'Yeah, when I achieve something like this, I am also very happy about it. Because it's definitely not something that happens every day, something anyone can do. So I do take some pride in such an accomplishment.'

Are you proving something to yourself or to the outside world?
'Maybe even more to my opponents, because I respect them all as great players, and I want to show that I can beat them and can compete with them. That's a good feeling.'

When did you get the feeling that you really belonged to that small group of players at the top of the world rankings?
'In 2012 I started to have much better results. I don't know what changed, but I started winning tournaments, beating guys like Lev and Magnus and Kramnik and Vishy. My overall results improved, although I definitely wasn't playing at their level, and I could feel that, but in any case I was trying to beat them, often successfully. My rating also rose very rapidly. I already started feeling that I could be a top player. The last couple of years have just cemented my belief that I deserve to be in this group.'

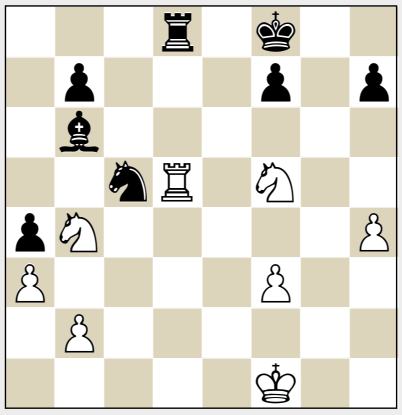
The streak ended in Round 8 against Magnus. You said you couldn't call it a real disappointment. Still, were you sour?
'After the game, when I looked with the computer, I understood that I had missed a very big chance. But I clinched tournament victory and I drew Magnus, which is never a bad result. I was also a bit apprehensive before the start of the game, because I envisioned some extremely bizarre circumstances in which I managed to lose three games and he managed to win three games...'

'I envisioned some extremely bizarre circumstances in which I managed to lose three games and he managed to win three games...'

No doubt he was still thinking about that.
'(Laughs) Yeah, OK, nothing that extreme has ever happened, but anything is possible. I think he was still hoping that some miracle would occur. But after the opening he must have lost those hopes, because it didn't go well for him from the start.'

So you were more annoyed by the chance you missed in Game 9.
'That was pretty absurd. I mean, I didn't consider a draw a bad result, even though Hikaru was not in good form and he had just lost to Veselin. And he was probably pretty nervous before the game, maybe even depressed. I wasn't unhappy with the result of the opening and after that I just increased my advantage. So it looked as if it was going to be a clean game. I was pretty sure that I was going to win. Especially after he started blitzing out moves, which were obviously just desperation, because he didn't see any defence. He just went for the murkiest line he could see, but in any case, totally winning for me. And I had more than enough time to finish off the game cleanly. This tactic is just so simple. Even Chris Bird, the arbiter, saw it. He told me, which made me feel great (laughs). He's probably a decent player, but in any case, if the arbiter sees a win and you don't, that's probably not a good sign.'

The last game was less eventful, and so you finished 8 and a half out of 10. People have compared it to many things. If you were to make a comparison, what would it remind you of?
'Definitely nothing from my play. During the tournament I actually had a look at Karpov's games from Linares '94, because I just wanted to see what I was up against. I was a bit surprised. I am not sure if there was a mistake in the database, or if it was really correct, because apparently Bareev, in the second round against Karpov, not only blundered a rook, but also got mated.



Karpov-Bareev
Linares 1994
position after 35. ♖d5

35...♗a7?? 36.♖xd8 Mate.

'If this really happened, it qualifies for the biggest blunder of the century. You always need some luck to win like this. I also had some luck, in my second game; that was obvious.'

Karpov's 6-0 is what you would compare your result to?
'Yeah, I think in the end his result was better, as he had 11 out of 13, which is probably better than I did. But in any case, these are sort of comparable performances.' ■

Yochanan Afek

Beware: Brilliancy!

Oversights are part of the practice of each and everyone of us. Here are six positions from the Tromsø Olympiad, in which brilliant chances were missed. Can you do better?

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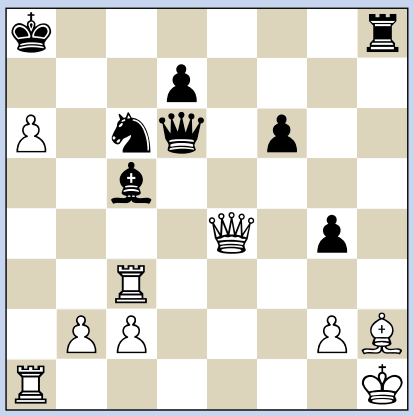

1. White to play

White prevented the mate threat on h2 by the natural **33.g3** only to be surprised by **33...♖xh2+! 34.♔xh2 ♕d2+** and he resigned before 35.♔h1 ♕h6+ 36.♔g2 ♕h3 mate. White could have struck first. How?

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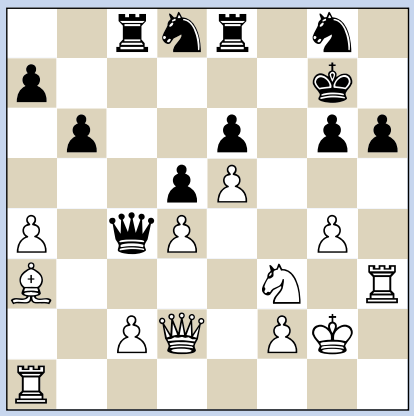

2. White to play

The game continued **24.♖ah1 ♘f7 25.♘e1 ♕xa4 26.♗c1 ♖c7 27.♕f4 ♖f8** and once White's attacking efforts reached a dead end. What career highlight did White miss?

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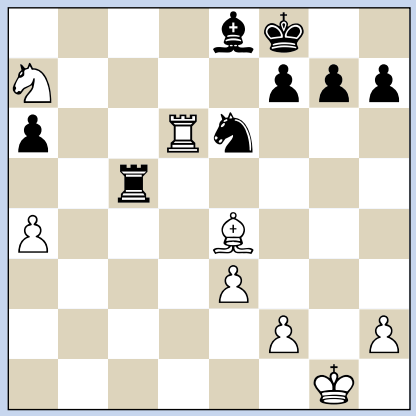

3. Black to play

After **37...♖a5 38.♗d3 ♖xa4 39.♖xa6 ♖g4+ 40.♔f1 ♘c5 41.♗e2 ♖h4 42.♖a5 ♘b7 43.♖h5 ♖a4 44.♘b5 ♗c6 45.f4** a draw was duly agreed on. Can you generate more from this seemingly equal position?

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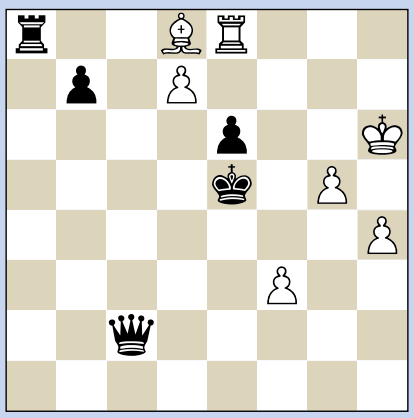

4. Black to play

Black managed to stop the menacing passer by **42...♔d6** However, after **43.♗f6 ♔xd7 44.♖xa8 e5?** (more stubborn was 44...♕f5 45.♖a3 b5) **45.g6 ♕c6 46.♖f8** there was nothing to fight for anymore. What forced path to salvation did Black miss?

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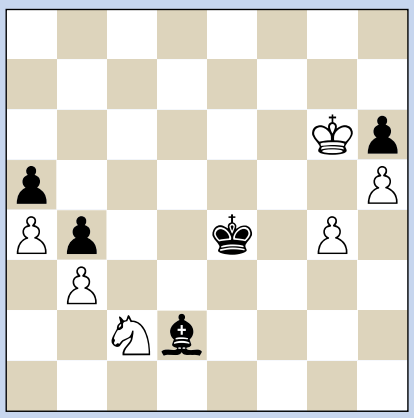

5. White to play

White chose to sacrifice his besieged knight in a desperate attempt to obtain some counterchances: **50.♘e1 ♗xe1 51.♔xh6 ♗d2+ 52.♔g6** However, it proved too little too late after **52...♔f4! 53.g5 ♔g4 54.h6 ♗c3 55.♔f7** Can you implement his idea in a more efficient manner?

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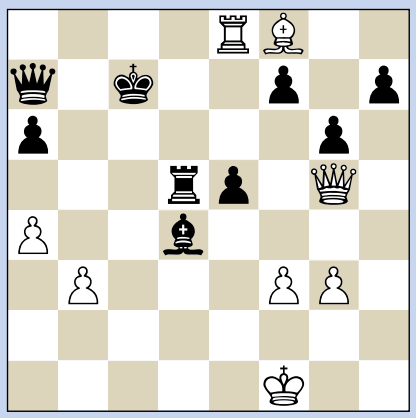


6. White to play

Having had a completely winning position for the last ten moves, White panicked with **37.♕c1+ ♔b6 38.♖c8 ♕d7 39.♕c4 ♕h3+ 40.♔e2 ♕g2+** and the game was over. In fact he missed his last chance to create the sensation of the first round. And you?

The number of stars roughly indicates their estimated level of difficulty: 1 is easiest and 5 most difficult. **Solutions on page 99**

Dialogues of the deluded

Computers and the death of kibitzing

Dominic Lawson

on how silicon has turned pundits into mindless number-counters.

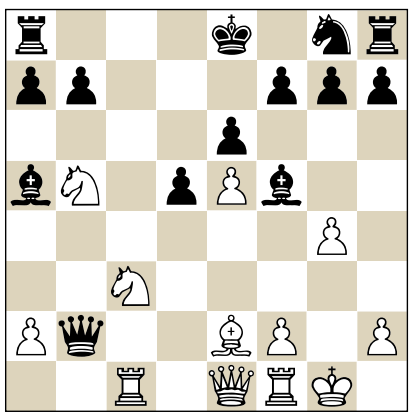
One of the most thrilling memories of a privileged journalistic career was being in the press room during the 1985 Moscow match between Garry Kasparov and the reigning champion Anatoly Karpov. Although I have no Russian, it was fabulous to see leading Soviet players arguing furiously during each game about which player was in the ascendancy and disputing their competing analyses, noisily, over various scattered chess sets.

This, of course, was before the era of the apparently omniscient chess computer program, when all argument is immediately silenced by the silicon oracle. That same year, 1985, Kasparov undertook a simultaneous display against 32 different chess computers in Hamburg – the best such programs of the time. Kasparov won 32-0. Ah, the good old days.

Now every patzer can for less than the price of an average restaurant meal have at his disposal a program that could play 32 Kasparovs simultaneously and come out on top. Or, without even parting with a cent, he can log on to a site such as ChessBomb and watch the top grandmas-

ters' games with simultaneous analysis from Stockfish working through 36,223,289 nodes at 22-ply.

It doesn't seem to occur to many of those staring at their screens that while Stockfish may have an imputed Elo rating in the 3,000s it is not God. Yet, having spent some time looking at the online commentary during the Sinquefield Cup, I can see that this confusion of the computer with absolute truth is endemic. Thus, for example, after Caruana played his immensely strong novelty 15.g4!! against Maxime Vachier-Lagrave in their game from the third round, a kibitzer on Chessgames.com identifying himself as Chesswar1000 instantly messaged the following: 'g4?????'.

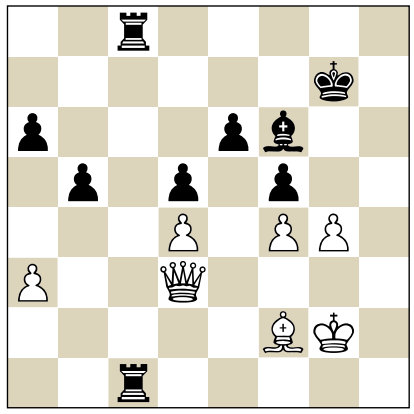


Caruana-Vachier-Lagrave
St. Louis 2014
position after 15.g4!!

Why the five question marks? Well, Stockfish had already decided that 15.♘a4 was the best move, according it +0.3, while it evaluated White's position after 15.g4 to be –0.66. Even if its analysis had been perfect, a negative swing of a fraction under 1 pawn is hardly worthy of five question marks (indeed, no move is, under any recognized form of annotation). Yet one of the consequences of these computer variations assessing positions down to alleged advantages of one hundredth of a pawn, is that when a grandmaster plays a move which shifts the evaluation by 96/100ths of a pawn (can you believe it?), mesmerised kibitzers immediately denounce the move as a blunder of unspeakable magnitude.

Nor does it seem to occur to them that Fabiano Caruana, perhaps the most formidably prepared of all the world's top players, would have subjected this critical position in the Caro-Kann Defence to analysis by multiple computers for much longer than Stockfish was given by 'Mr Chesswar1000'. Finally and most importantly, it seemingly doesn't cross their minds that Fabiano and his coach also used their own powers of judgement, which informed them that the assessments of computers were insufficiently penetrating. Indeed, it is increasingly the case that the most valuable opening novelties at the top level are those which transcend computer evaluations.

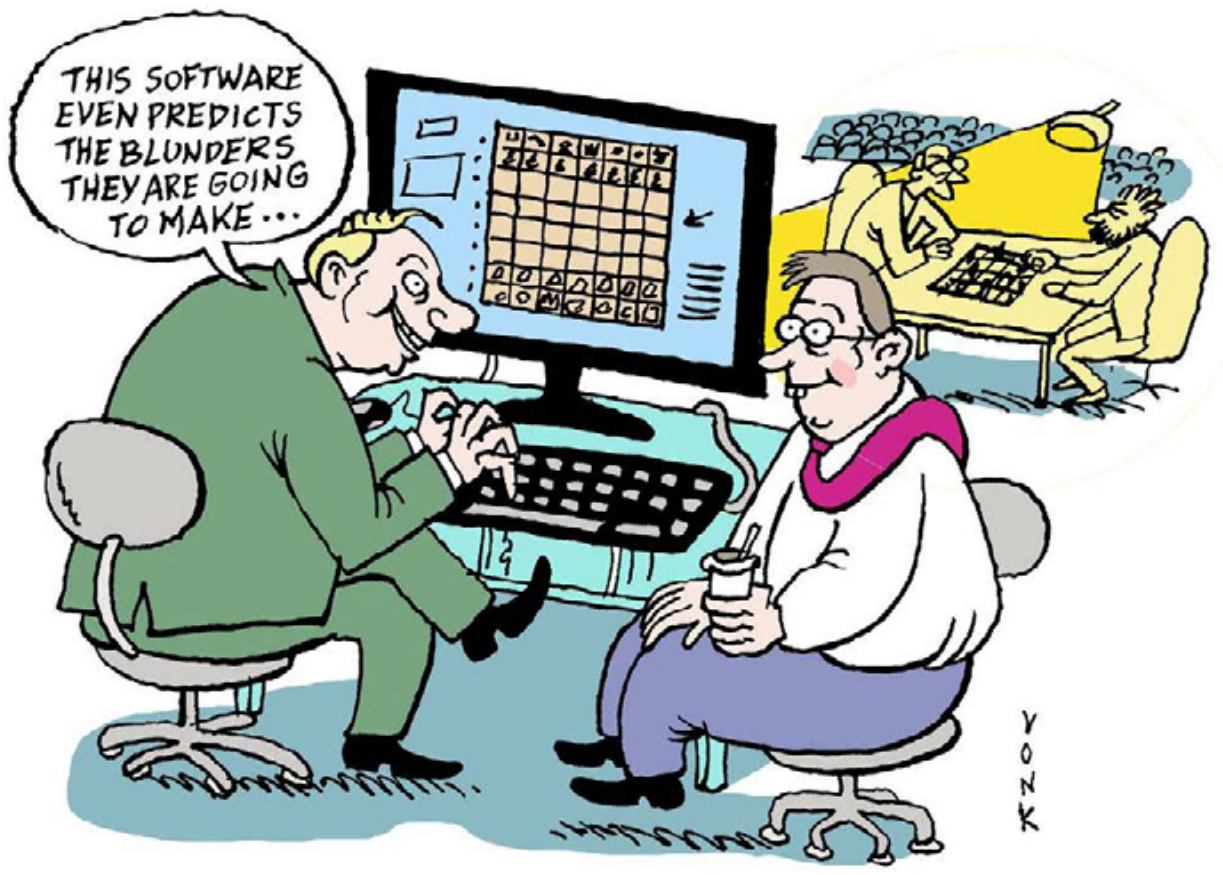
Yet even when howling 'blunder!' at genuinely inferior moves – rather than at brilliant ones, such as 15.g4!! – these kibitzers are almost insufferable. For example, when in his 5th round Sinquefield Cup game against Hikaru Nakamura, Fabiano missed the decisive 44…♗h4!! (giving up his bishop to trap his opponent's queen), there was an instant deluge of scornful commentary.



Nakamura-Caruana
St. Louis 2014
position after 44.g4

'Blunder!' said 'Feuertrunken'. 'Blunderana' said 'Kaffe', thinking it amusing to turn Fabiano's surname into a form of ridicule; while 'Bombchess' declared 'Big blunder. 44…♗h4 was not hard to find.'

Even some Grandmasters who should know better fall into this form of exaggerated denunciation. After each round of the Sinquefield Cup GM Maurice Ashley would demonstrate to the exhausted players where 'the computer' had established that their moves were inferior and ask them, almost in so many words, 'How



did you miss that?' Ashley did exactly that to Caruana over this missed opportunity against Nakamura. The Italian, with characteristic politeness, pointed out to his interrogator that first of all he was under time pressure, and second that 44....♗h4 'was a very unusual tactic. It didn't enter my head at all.' Fabiano might also have pointed out that even after what he played instead, Black was still clearly winning, as he demonstrated.

It should also go without saying that what is 'a very unusual tactic' to the world's second strongest player would almost certainly not have occurred to GM Ashley – even if he had established such a position against Hikaru Nakamura; and the chances of it being seen over the board without a computer by the online patzers would be as near zero as makes no difference.

They remind me of obese football fans who howl and jeer unmercifully at matches when one of the superfit professionals hits a forty yard pass which goes astray. But at least the football fans have handed over a lot of money to get into the ground and could therefore be said to have paid for the right to abuse those soccer stars whose enormous wages they are helping to fund. I'm afraid the abusive chess kibitzers do not have even that justification.

And abuse is the right word. For example, during Carlsen's 84 move draw in the 9th round of the Sinquefield Cup against Levon Aronian, 'AlexandraThess' commented on Chessgames.com: 'Such a weak player. That Carlsen punk can't even win a basic endgame.' Well, yes, Magnus did blunder in a winning rook and pawn ending to allow Aronian a drawing device known as 'the Vancura position', which has been known about for almost a century. But I'll wager that none of this was understood by 'AlexandraThess', who clearly needs help of a non-chess nature.

This game also illustrated just how hopelessly misguided punditry directed by computer analysis can be, at least when the computer is not loaded with endgame tablebases. On ChessBomb Stockfish had Carlsen still with an advantage of at least +4.00 for almost forty moves, while Magnus was playing on in self-punishing fury knowing full well he had allowed Levon to establish an unbreakable drawing mechanism. This did not occur to many of the online kibitzers, who, guided by Stockfish, were speculating as to why Aronian had not already resigned!

'It is mystifying why people would want to spend hours apparently watching chess, while not actually thinking about the moves at all.'

What became clear to me, on watching this dialogue of the deluded, was that many of them were doing nothing more than just looking at the computer evaluation and then commenting on that numeral. It is mystifying why people would want to spend hours apparently watching chess, while not actually thinking about the moves at all.

It's possible, of course, that these are not really chess fans, but gamblers: it is now common for people to bet online on the result of games. That might, in fact, explain some of the more abusive comments about the players: if a punter has just lost real money because a player he'd put a wager on to win had stumbled into a draw, one can understand the irritation. However, it seems odd to imagine that anyone else would be interested in his disappointment.

There is an even less appealing explanation for some of the more savage online abuse of our leading grandmasters from patzers armed with large computer programs. Perhaps they are the chess equivalent of nonentities who try to assassinate great men – a grim feature of American public life over the decades. Just as the gun enables the inconsequential loner to somehow 'equalize' himself with, say, John Lennon or John F. Kennedy, so the computer allows the talentless to prove themselves 'better' than celebrated grandmasters. And via online comments they can broadcast their imaginary superiority to the world.

Of course, this only describes the more pathetic fringe of commentators. But even for the more rational, there remains a risk that by being able to 'see' moves generated at the click of a mouse that take Grandmasters much longer to find unaided, we underestimate the extraordinary skill of today's chess champions—and somehow are deceived into thinking that they are not the equals of those from the pre-computer age.

Alexander Grischuk summed this up very well in a post-game interview during the last Candidates' tournament: 'Now that the computer paints our moves red for blunder even while we are playing, the public thinks we are not as good as the Grandmasters of the past, when the arguments would go on for weeks about which moves were good and which not.' I fear Alexander is right. In those days there was an air almost of mystique about chess at the highest level, as the secrets of an individual game might take months or even years to uncover fully.

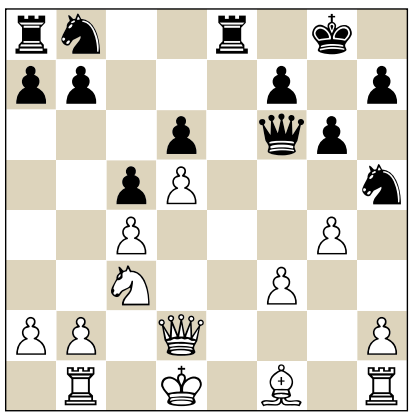
However, there is a simple way in which we can restore that sense of

mystery and therefore an appropriate respect to the greatest grandmasters of the present – at least during the playing of their games. It is only necessary to follow the commentary of other fine players who are not aided by computers, and with our own programs firmly switched off.

That allows the grandmaster pundits to expand on the strategic aspects of the struggle, rather than echo the calculations of computers. My friend Nigel Short insists on commenting in this way, without computer support, and it is genuinely instructive: but then Nigel has always been a hell-fire preacher against the pernicious influence of software on his profession.

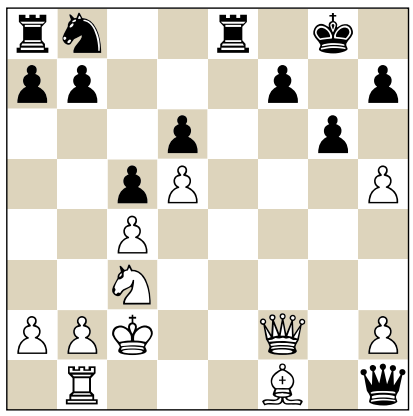
In this context, I especially enjoyed the coverage led by this magazine's esteemed editor, Dirk Jan ten Geuzendam, of the Anand-Gelfand World Championship match of 2012. Each day there would be one or two leading Grandmasters in the studio with Dirk Jan – and not a computer evaluation in sight.

So, for example, in the eighth game of that match, while those following on the computer-aided commentaries knew that if Gelfand were to play 14...♕f6 then the game would be all over – and spewed multiple question marks as soon as Boris played it – those of us watching Dirk Jan discussing the position with that day's commentator Peter Leko were in a delightful state of suspense.



Anand-Gelfand
Moscow 2012 (8)
position after 14...♕f6?

(Black should have withdrawn the attacked knight and the game continues. Now, after 15.gxh5 ♕xf3+ 16.♔c2 ♕xh1 17.♕f2 it turns out that the black queen is lost, and so Gelfand resigned.)

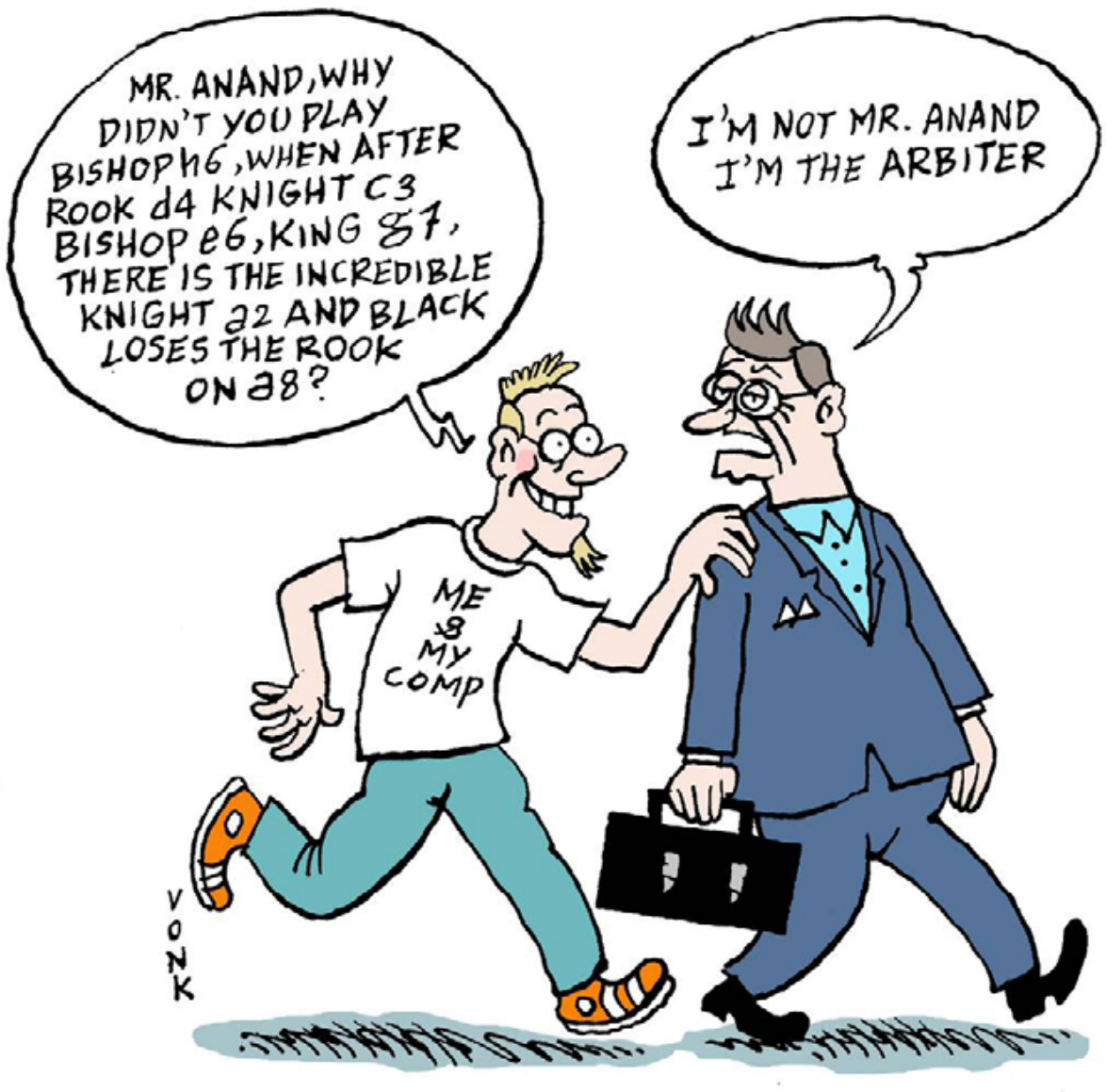


position after 17.♕f2

I recall that Peter was genuinely uncertain as to the tactics, having not anticipated Vishy Anand's queen-trapping move 17.♕f2, but only 17.♕f4, which would actually have given Gelfand a big advantage. Indeed, it seems clear that Gelfand, as well as Leko, had missed 17.♕f2 – and both men are superb calculators. Yet on Chessgames.com WGM Natalia Pogonina, who really should know better, instantly awarded 14…♕f6 no fewer than eight question marks, the second Boris played it.

Still, Natalia has contributed to the popularization of chess, in challenging the absurd stereotype that women can have brains or beauty but not both. I'm afraid, however, that the computer-aided kibitzing on chess websites has become increasingly ugly – and stupid. ■

Dominic Lawson is the author of The Inner Game (published as Endgame in the US), an insider's account of the Kasparov-Short World Championship match in London in 1993. He writes a monthly chess column for Standpoint Magazine and was just elected President of the English Chess Federation.


MR. ANAND, WHY DIDN'T YOU PLAY BISHOP h6, WHEN AFTER ROOK d4 KNIGHT c3 BISHOP e6, KING g7, THERE IS THE INCREDIBLE KNIGHT a2 AND BLACK LOSES THE ROOK ON a8?
I'M NOT MR. ANAND I'M THE ARBITER
ME IS MY COMP
VONK

From last year they knew that being the strongest doesn't guarantee success. This time their line-up was just as impressive, but as if by a miracle, all members of SOCAR were in great form. Winning all their seven matches, the Azeri juggernaut confidently claimed the European Club Cup in Bilbao.
Our man-on-the-spot **Anish Giri** didn't shirk work, scored 5½ out of 7 and earned enough rating points to rise to 7th place in the world rankings.

Clean sweep in Bilbao

SOCAR, so good

I often think of the European Club Cup, the Champions League of chess if you wish, as the Olympiad's little brother. Every year almost all the best players take part, but there are also many amateur teams who combine a pleasant trip abroad with competing in the same event as (and sometimes facing) the top grandmasters.

This year's edition, in Bilbao, was no exception, with dozens of stars being present (in fact, Magnus Carlsen was the only absent top-10 player). The stars were carefully spread over the top 10 clubs, while the rest of the hall was filled with 40-odd additional 'open' teams largely made up of non-professional chess lovers, and eight teams contesting the 'women's' section. On a separate stage, there was a further treat for the spectators: the Bilbao Masters, in which Vishy Anand, Levon Aronian, Ruslan Ponomariov and Paco Vallejo competed. In short, a true chess festival brought together under the umbrella of Bilbao Chess 2014.

Since I have already ventured onto the slippery path of drawing a parallel between the European Chess Club

Veselin Topalov and Anish Giri confidently await the start of the last round. The Bulgarian raised his rating to a perfect 2800, while the young Dutchman climbed to 7th place in the world rankings.

Cup and the Champions League, I feel obliged to clarify a matter that often mystifies the uninitiated. Can you imagine Messi playing side by side with Ronaldo in Madricelona? Or Robben representing Bayern Munich, while in the same season helping PSV to battle Ajax in the Dutch league? In chess these are not unthinkable scenarios, for the simple reason that in the world of chess, teams don't pay millions for transfers and chess professionals are allowed to play in as many national leagues as they wish (sounds good, but given the choice, I'd still go for the football).

For the European Club Cup, however, if more than one of your teams is participating, you have to choose. Or at least, you can only play for one club. Take my personal case. Both my Dutch club 'En Passant' and my Spanish club 'Sestao' participated in Bilbao, but instead of playing for one of them, I represented 'SOCAR Azerbaijan' – without actually ever having played in the Azeri league (which as far as I know doesn't even exist). In the past two years, SOCAR always was the clear favourite in the European Club Cup, thanks to the stable position of the oil industry in the land of fire, Azerbaijan. In Eilat 2012, SOCAR pipped Saint Petersburg at the post in a nervous race following a shocking defeat in the first round. Last year, in Rhodes, there was an even bigger shocker, when the outsiders from Novy Bor threw a spanner in the works by beating SOCAR in Round 6 and proceeding to claim the cup.

Captained by experienced trainer Vladimir Tukmakov, SOCAR never lacked strong players, but running ahead a bit, it was only this year that our team finally dominated the field, not only in the starting list, but also in the final standings. Packed with stars like Shakhriyar Mamedyarov, Veselin Topalov, Mickey Adams, Teimour Radjabov, Wang Hao, Anton

Korobov and Eltaj Safarli, you would expect our team to have no rivals, but there was the mighty Italian team Obiettivo Risarcimento, headed by the unstoppable Don Fabio (what an epic nickname, thanks Maurice A.) and also boasting American star Hikaru (in Japanese this means 'shine', ha-ha-ha) and the top three of the national French team (Vachier-Lagrave, Bacrot and Fressinet). We may mention other rivals, too, such as the Russian teams of 'Malakhite' (Grischuk, Karjakin, Leko and Shirov, a.o.) and 'Saint-Petersburg' (Svidler, Dominguez, Vitiugov). And of course last year's winners 'Novy Bor' (Wojtaszek, Navara, Sasikiran), who had gotten even stronger by adding Harikrishna to their line-up.

Held in Bilbao, a proud city in the land of the Basques, the organizers had their sights set high, judging from the swinging legs of the amazing dancers at the opening ceremony. However, following this high point there were quite a few lows, and this report would have been a lot darker, had it not been for the incredibly smooth performance of the team of its author. During the opening ceremony there were many speeches. So many of them ended with 'Don't forget to enjoy the beautiful city of Bilbao' that even those who probably hadn't intended to say it, ended up by including this admonition in their speeches, just to fit in. And indeed, the city of Bilbao had quite some sights to offer.

> 'Incidentally, the top four Board 1 players at the Olympiad were all members of SOCAR!'

The opening banquet was less rich, although I had some delicious nuts. There were cashew nuts, walnuts, ehm... did I already mention cashews? Let's get back to chess!

After last year's painful loss against the G-team from Novy Bor, when Caruana, Topalov and Kamsky all lost on the same day – an event comparable to a once-in-a-century solar eclipse – we were obviously aiming for revenge this time. Our line-up had changed somewhat. Don Fabio had left the team for Obiettivo Risarcimento and was replaced by Mickey Adams, the never-aging English 'Spider' ('Maman', the spider, a famous sculpture in Bilbao, may or may not have anything to do with our Board 3). Furthermore Gata Kamsky was replaced by Ukrainian 'forward' Anton Korobov, a very ambitious and powerful player. Otherwise the team had stayed the same. Veselin Topalov seemed to be back in form, as witness his gold medal on Board 1 in Tromsø (incidentally, the top four Board 1 players at the Olympiad were all members of SOCAR!). And so was Shakhriyar Mamedyarov, famous for his power play when in form. Teimour Radjabov had suffered a prolonged crisis, but after beating Magnus Carlsen in Shamkir it is probably only a matter of time till he is back at the top. At least, that's what it looked like in Bilbao. Wang Hao remains a mysterious player, yet incredibly strong and imaginative (don't miss his king march against Bologan!). And our last board, Eltaj Safarli, is a talented Azeri player who is last in the list only because our team is simply too strong.

Our line-up is the professional secret of our trainer Vladimir Tukmakov, so I won't go into too much detail. As you can see, our highest-rated player, Topalov, was on Board 2 behind Mamedyarov, and yours truly, who 'should' have been playing on second board if you consider the 'live ratings', was playing on Board 4 behind Mickey Adams. One can always argue whether another line-up would have worked as well, but one way or another, we could hardly have done better than 7/7.

Bilbao Chess 2014 combined the European Club Cup and the Bilbao Masters.

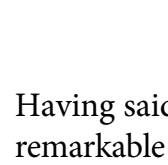
NEW IN CHESS

Having said that, there was one quite remarkable upset on the first day. Peter Leko was crushed by Manuel Bosboom! Although the Dutch genius is still an IM, this result wasn't entirely a bolt from the blue. After all, Bosboom garnered international fame when in 1999 he beat none other than Garry Kasparov in a blitz game in Wijk aan Zee (Kasparov's only loss, although he nevertheless went on to win the blitz tournament). Still, it isn't every day that you see Peter Leko lose to a player rated 300 points lower than himself!

My explanation for Peter's unfortunate loss is quite simple. He knew who he was dealing with: Manuel is a very dangerous and creative attacker, his pet set-ups being something like ♕c2, ♘f3, b3, ♗b2, g4, ♖g1, and so on. That's what Peter must have been expecting. However, Bosboom never made any such moves, and while fighting ghosts (and possibly avoiding drawish simplifications), the Hungarian living legend simply forgot about generally accepted positional values. That was just unfair!

NEW IN CHESS

Manuel Bosboom: 'Never change a winning tie!'



NOTES BY
Manuel Bosboom

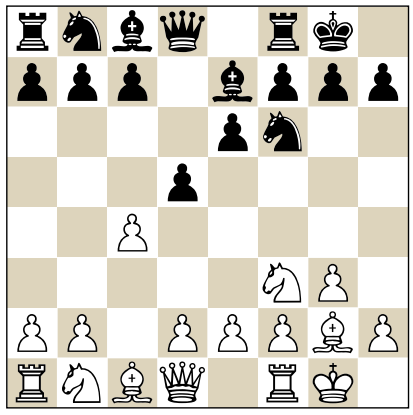
RE 8.3 – A14
Manuel Bosboom
Peter Leko
Bilbao 2014 (1)

In the previous edition of the European Club Cup, I reaped the fruits of a long collaboration with the people of En Passant. As we had become the number one club team in the Netherlands, we could play against some of the top teams in Rhodes, Greece. There, wearing my favourite yellow tie, I scored my first GM-norm of this millennium! Could I possibly repeat this trick in Bilbao?!

1.c4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 e6

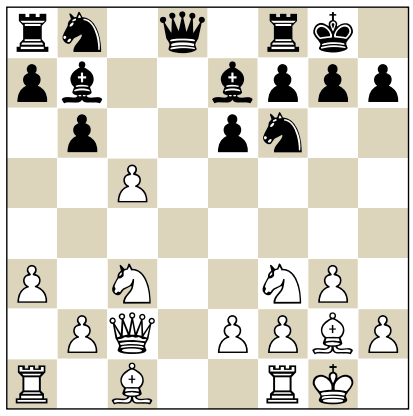
Ah! So the bishop is not going to my opponent's favourite square g7.

3.g3 d5 4.♗g2 ♗e7 5.0-0 0-0



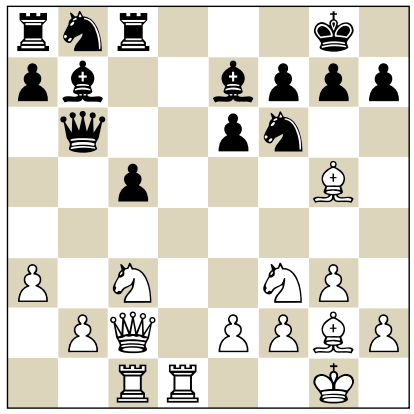
6.♕c2 Just to avoid the endless theory of stuff like 6.d4 dxc4 7.♕a4, etc.

6...b6 7.cxd5 ♘xd5 8.a3 ♗b7 9.d4 ♘f6 10.♘c3 c5 11.dxc5

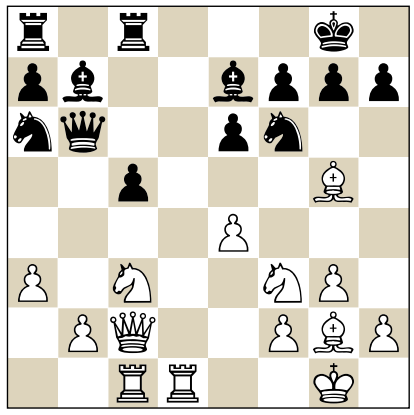


11...bxc5?! Maybe a bit too dynamic and/or optimistic.

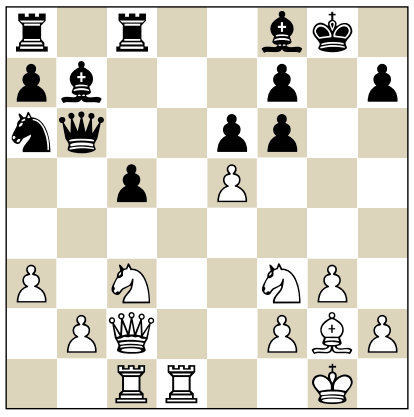
12.♖d1 ♕b6 13.♗g5 ♖c8 14.♖ac1



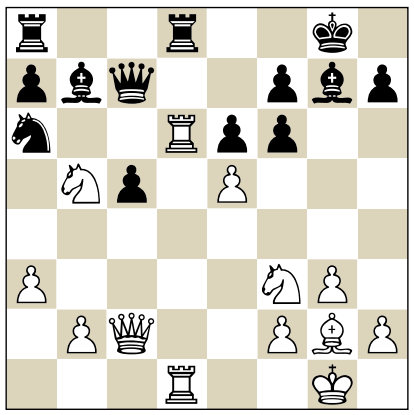
14...♘a6?! A step in the wrong direction. Better seems 14...c4. Or 14...h6 15.♗xf6 ♗xf6, sacking the c-pawn. **15.e4!**



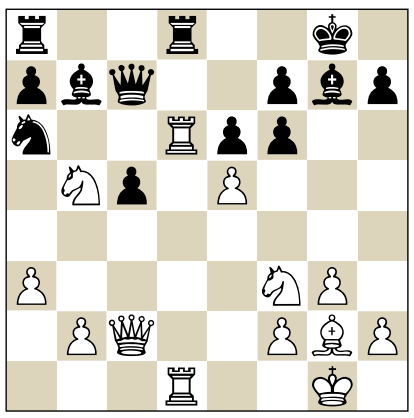
15...♗f8? Losing ground. Possible was 15...h6 16.e5! hxg5 17.♘xg5 ♖d8! (but not 17...g6 18.exf6 ♗xf6 19.♘xf7) 18.exf6 ♗xf6 19.♕h7+ ♔f8, and Black is still standing.
16.♗xf6?! Not the best, since after 16.♘e5! White has a large advantage.
16...gxf6 17.e5



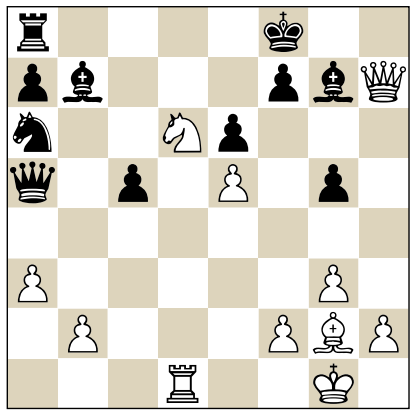
17...♗g7 Now it is easy for White. More complicated was 17...f5 18.g4!? ♗h6! with counterplay.
18.♖d6 ♕c7 19.♖cd1 ♖d8 20.♘b5



20...♕a5 It does not matter anymore. If 20... ♕e7 White goes 21.♘g5! ♗xg2 (21...fxg5 22.♗xb7, winning) 22.♕xh7+ ♔f8 23.exf6 ♕xf6 (or 23...♗xf6 24.♔xg2 ♕b7+ 25.♘e4!) 24.♕h5!, winning back the piece with a superior position.



21.♘g5! Obvious but strong.
21...♖xd6? The only move to stay in the game was 21...fxg5, for instance 22.♗xb7 ♖xd6 23.♖xd6 ♖b8 24.♗xa6 ♗xe5 et cetera.
22.♕xh7+ ♔f8 23.♘xd6 fxg5



24.♗xb7
Or first 24.♕h5 ♕c7, and then 25.♗xb7.
24...♖d8 25.♕h5 ♖d7 26.♘c4
And Black resigned, as he will lose the knight.

After this nice start I scored another GM-norm with 5½ out of 7.
The moral of the story: Never change a winning tie!

■ ■ ■

In my first round game I was close to a similar fiasco, but fortunately my inexperienced opponent blundered at a point where I had almost lost all hope. Our team went on to beat SK Team Viking from Sweden 5½-½, since Michael Adams ran into very strong opposition from GM Agrest.

Already in the second round, as predicted by our Chinese oracle Wang Hao, we were paired with a strong team, SHSM from Moscow, for which I played for a couple of years, though mostly with the black pieces. I failed to beat Grachev from a very promising position, but my teammates were on a roll. Especially interesting was Mamedyarov's win over Nepomniachtchi. Our Board 1 showed a deeper understanding of chess than theirs, even though he couldn't match his speed.

Mickey Adams ground down Alexey Dreev in his trademark style.

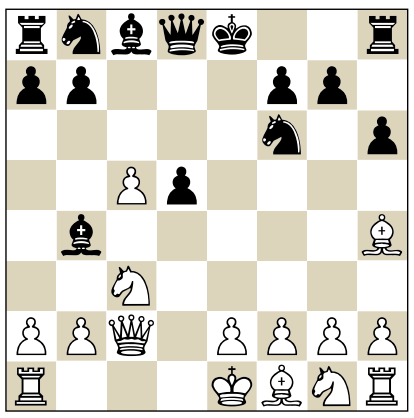
NOTES BY
Michael Adams

NI 23.15 – E35
Alexey Dreev
Michael Adams
Bilbao 2014 (2)

When Dirk Jan asked me to annotate a game from Bilbao, I reacted with the enthusiasm of Anish being served a fish dinner. I had enjoyed the unusual luxury of playing in a team event with all the players in good form and making a small contribution to SOCAR's victory, but feared inflicting my less than sparkling play on the readers. There were a couple of oddities in my five games – I managed to drag out a couple of them past the 120-move mark, but also won two games with Black in the same rather solid variation. Vishy even commented to me with a smile at the closing: 'I see you are making a living with this line.' Anyway, here is the first, which is about half as long as its cousin.

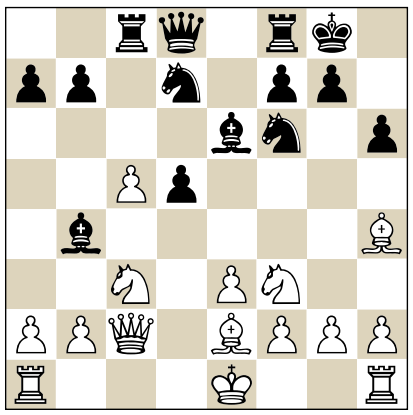
> 'Vishy even commented to me with a smile: "I see you are making a living with this line."'

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♗b4 4.♕c2 d5 5.cxd5 exd5 6.♗g5 h6 7.♗h4 c5 8.dxc5

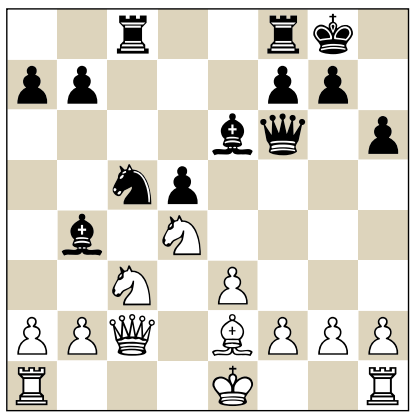


Mickey Adams had long days at the office with a couple of games dragging on past the 120-moved mark. For our pages 'the Spider' chose to annotate an instructive 61-move miniature against Alexey Dreev.

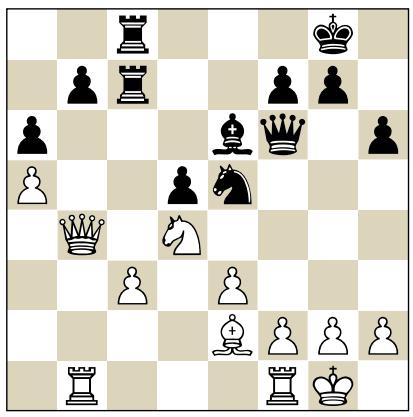
8...0-0 It's strange that so few games have been played with this routine move, which has only come into fashion recently, when so many have continued with the razor sharp 8...g5.
9.e3 ♗e6 10.♘f3 ♘bd7 11.♗e2 ♖c8



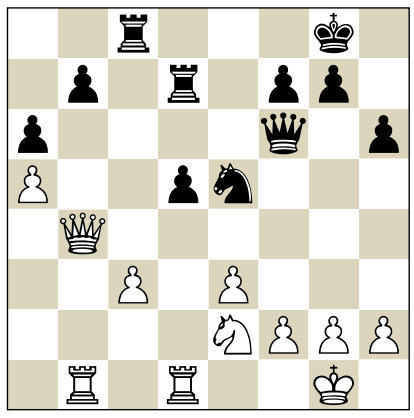
12.♘d4
In the sixth round, Alexey Shirov played the sophisticated 12.c6, which could be a clever move. However, something went wrong for him in the game continuation and after 12... bxc6 13.0-0 ♕a5 14.♖ac1 c5 15.♖fd1 ♖fe8 16.a3 ♗xc3 17.bxc3 ♘e4 18.c4 ♘b6 19.♘d2 ♘xd2 20.cxd5 ♗xd5 21.♕xd2 ♕a4 I was doing well. I will spare you the remaining 99 moves.
12...♘xc5 13.♗xf6 ♕xf6



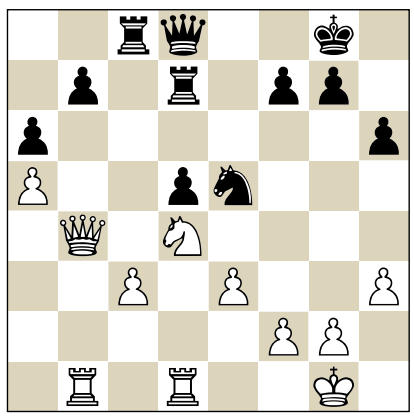
14.0-0 ♘d7 A necessary retreat. It is essential to saddle White with a weak pawn on c3 or he will take full control. **15.♕a4 ♗xc3 16.bxc3 a6 17.♕b4 ♖c7 18.a4 ♖fc8 19.a5 ♘e5 20.♖ab1**



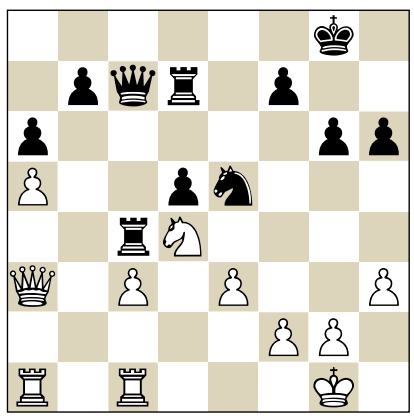
A key moment. I thought it was important to play 20.h3 to keep the bishops on the board. Once my worst piece disappears, Black has an easy game, as my other guys are well placed.
20...♗g4 21.♗xg4 ♘xg4 22.♘e2 ♘e5 23.♖fd1 ♖d7 This rook does a good job of covering my two weak points, and its colleague, my queen and my knight can target the white pawns, particularly the one on a5.



24.h3 ♕d8 25.♘d4

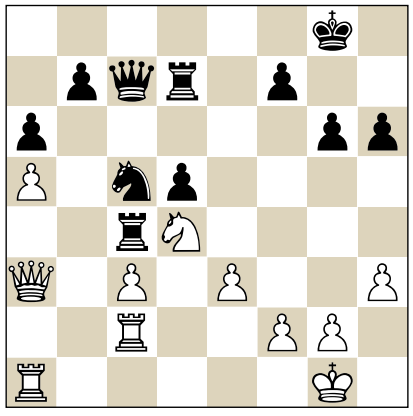


25...g6 A handy move. As well as preventing ♘f5 and giving my king more breathing space, it also poses the awkward question as to how White should proceed.
26.♖a1 ♖c4 27.♕a3 ♕c7
It's hard to suggest improvements for White, but it is clear he is being driven backwards.
28.♖dc1



28...♘d3 The knight gains a tempo en route to an even better post, where ♖a4 and ♘a4 can be menaced.

29.♖c2 ♘c5

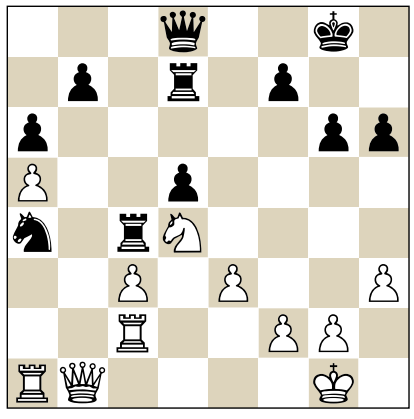


30.♕b4 A rather beautiful move, which I had completely failed to consider: the queen moves to a square where it is under attack. The mundane 30.♕c1 ♘a4 was no stronger.

30...♕d8

White should be fine after 30...♖xb4 31.cxb4 ♕d8, but of course there is no compulsion to grab the queen.

31.♕b1 ♘a4 31...♘e4 is another good option here.

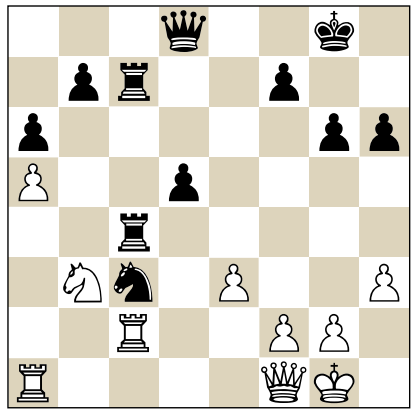


32.♘b3

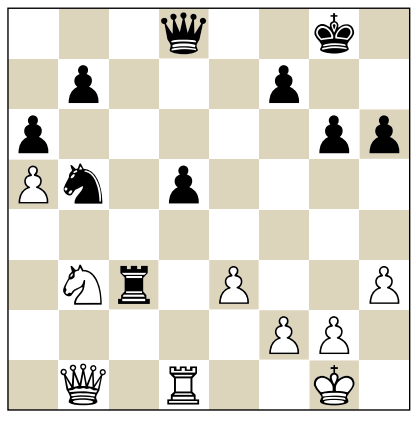
I failed to notice that following 32.♕b3 ♕xa5 33.♘f3 I am forced to part with the exchange, although I remain in good shape after 33...b5 34.♘e5 ♖d6. Possibly Dreev wasn't aware of this resource either, as I guess it is the best try for White.

32...♘xc3 33.♕f1 ♖dc7

The rest is a matter of technique or, in my case, lack thereof.



34.♕d3 ♘b5 35.♖xc4 ♖xc4 36.♖d1 ♖c3 37.♕b1



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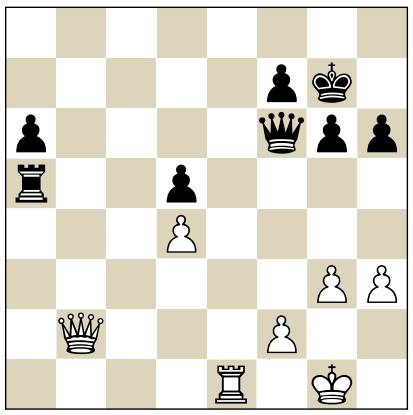
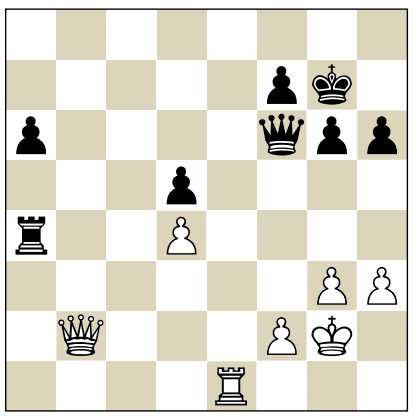
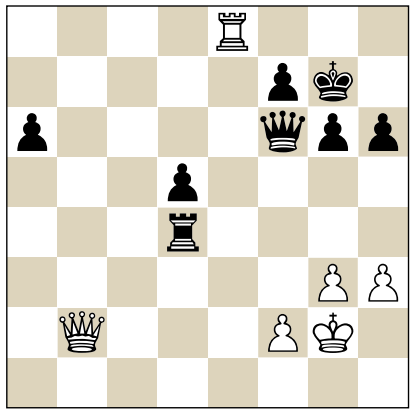
37...♕d6 In fact, the sneaky 37...♕c7 is the most precise, as the pawn is immune due to 38.♖xd5 ♕c4.
38.♘d4 ♘xd4 39.exd4 Forced, due to 39.♖xd4 ♕c7 40.♖d1 ♖c5.
39...♖a3 It was not easy to choose between this and 39...♕c7 40.♕b4 just before the time-control.
40.♕xb7 ♖xa5 41.♖e1 ♔g7 42.g3 Survival chances are not great either after 42.♕e7 ♕xe7 43.♖xe7.
42...♕f6 43.♕b2



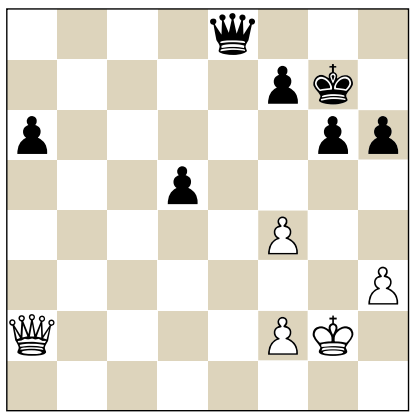
43...♖a4 During the game I seriously regretted not playing 43...♕f3, but the resourceful machine points out that 44.♕b8 keeps the game going.
44.♔g2 The best hope; 44.♖d1 ♕f3 is much too passive.



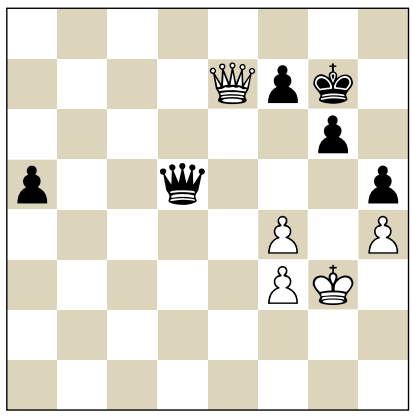
44...♖xd4
I had failed to realise earlier that 44...♕xd4 45.♕xd4+ ♖xd4 46.♖a1 gives White the best he can hope for, although practical results have not favoured the defender in this endgame recently. I even won a similar position myself against Fressinet in the 4NCL last year, although the game between Carlsen and my teammate Wang Hao is rather better known.
45.♖e8



45...♖f4 I managed to avoid 45...♖e4 46.♖g8+.
46.♕a2 After this the win is fairly straightforward. The best practical try was 46.♕xf6+ ♖xf6 47.♖d8 d4 (47...♖f5 48.♖a8) 48.♖xd4 a5 49.♖a4 ♖a6 50.♔f3 ♔f6 51.♔e4 ♔e6 52.♔d4, when there is still some work to be done.
46...♕c6 47.gxf4 47.♕b2+ is met by the deadly countercheck 47...d4+.
47...♕xe8



48.♕xd5 The d-pawn is almost home after 48.♕xa6 ♕e4+ 49.♔g3 d4.
48...♕b5 49.♕d4+ ♔h7 With my king imperturbable it is impossible to prevent the pawn inching forwards.
50.♕a7 ♕d5+ 51.♔g3 a5 52.f3 ♔g7 53.h4 h5 54.♕e7
Perhaps 54.♔g2 was a little better.



54...♕d4 This centralising move finishes the job.
55.♕a3
55.f5 is met by 55...♕f6.
55...a4 56.♕e7 ♕g1+ 57.♔h3 ♕h1+ 58.♔g3 ♕g1+ 59.♔h3 ♕a1 60.♔g3 a3 61.f5 a2
White resigned, as 62.fxg6 ♕f6 ends the argument.

■ ■ ■

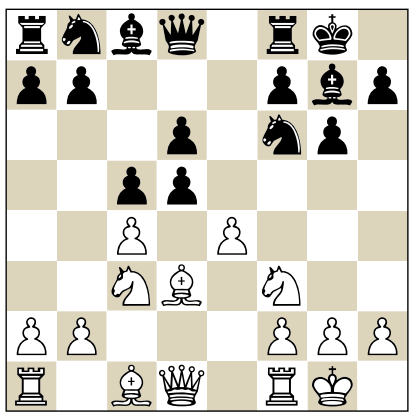
In the next round we had a lucky pairing, for the first and last time. We easily overcame the Oslo Schakselskap from Norway, which was like a dragon without a head: Agdestein, Hammer & Co without Magnus. Nevertheless, a young kid, Hauge Lars Oskar, about whom I had recently 'read' an article in a Norwegian newspaper, gave Hao quite a tough time. But the kid lost and it was Simen Agdestein who inflicted a painful defeat upon Veselin Topalov, who is known for his risky (maybe crazy is a better word?) decisions. Fortunately, the legendary Bulgarian has a reputation of not fearing defeats and he recovered quickly. In fact, the list of Vesko's victims included Morozevich, Navara, Nakamura and Svidler, leaving him with a hard task when he had to decide which game to comment for this article. In the end he decided on his game against Morozevich, with whom he has had a very one-sided rivalry lately, since he beat him in all their Grand Prix games of the previous cycle. Perhaps this lopsided result didn't come about by accident, as the two didn't shake hands for a while.

'The list of Vesko's victims included Morozevich, Navara, Nakamura and Svidler.'

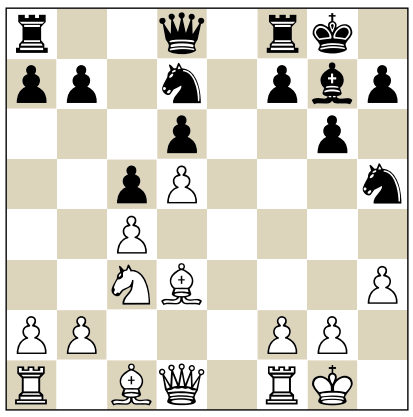
NOTES BY
Veselin Topalov

OI 10.11 – E90
Veselin Topalov
Alexander Morozevich
Bilbao 2014 (2)

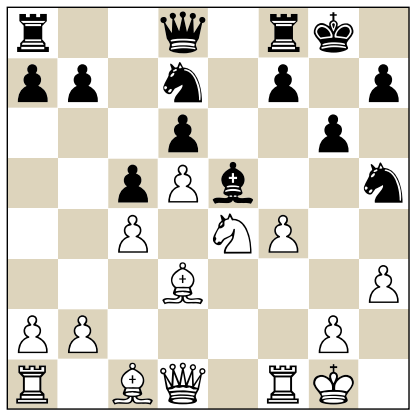
1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 g6 4.♘c3 ♗g7 5.e4 0-0 6.♘f3 d6 7.♗d3 e6 8.0-0 exd5



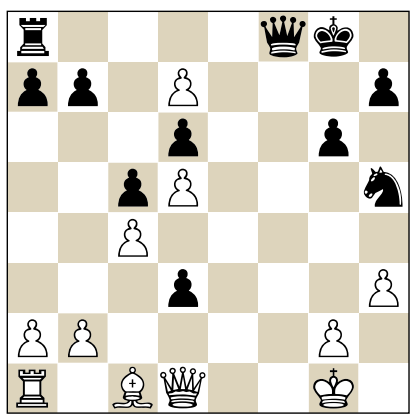
9.exd5 9.cxd5 is a completely different story. In general it is good for Black to exchange his light-squared bishop after 9...a6 10.a4 ♗g4.
9...♗g4 10.h3 ♗xf3 11.♕xf3
I played this line myself with the black pieces back in 1999 against Yusupov and remember that I did not like it very much. Black is slightly worse and his position can become very passive.
11...♘bd7 12.♕d1 ♘h5



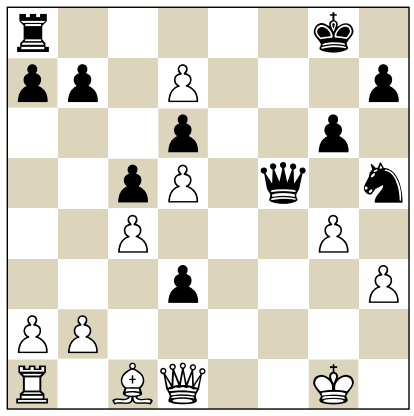
13.♘e4!? It seemed to me that 13.g4 ♗xc3! 14.bxc3 ♘g7 was exactly what my opponent wanted, leading to an unclear strategical fight.
13...♗e5 Probably Black overestimated the strength of his 14th move. He provokes my pawn to go to f4, but in fact this is part of my plan.
14.f4



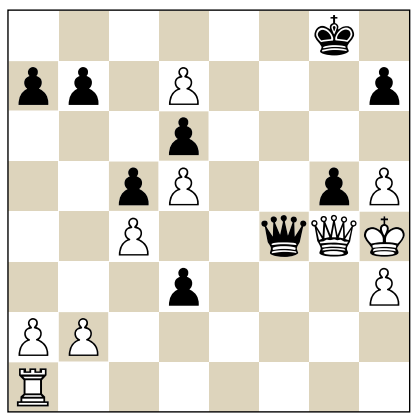
14...f5?! It was still not too late to go 14...♗d4+ 15.♔h2 and then defend the pawn on d6 somehow with a slightly worse position. Now, after some forced moves, Black's position becomes delicate.
15.fxe5 fxe4 16.♖xf8+ ♕xf8 17.e6! exd3 18.exd7



18...♕f5 Probably the best try. Black is in trouble after 18...♘f6 19.♕e1! ♘xd7 20.♕e6+ ♕f7 21.♕xd6.
19.g4! This required precise calculation. On the other hand, it is also true that after the move I was mostly considering – 19...♕e4 – Black can hope for a draw, but no more. So I didn't have to take a risky decision.

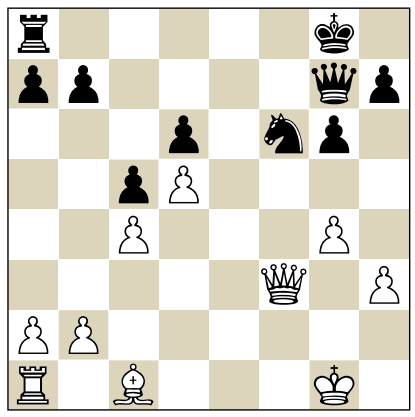


19...♕xd7
Quickly played. Instead, 19...♕e4 20.gxh5 ♖f8, with the idea of perpetual check (...♕d4+, followed by ...♕e4+) does not work. But not because of the natural 21.♗h6? (the second suggestion of the computer engine; 21.♕d2! also with a white advantage, I didn't even consider). After 21.♗h6, Black starts checking the white king: 21...♕d4+ 22.♔g2 ♕e4+ 23.♔g3 ♕e5+ and now 24.♔h4? runs into a mate that I believe deserves a diagram: 24...♖f4+ 25.♗xf4 ♕xf4+ 26.♕g4 g5 mate.



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

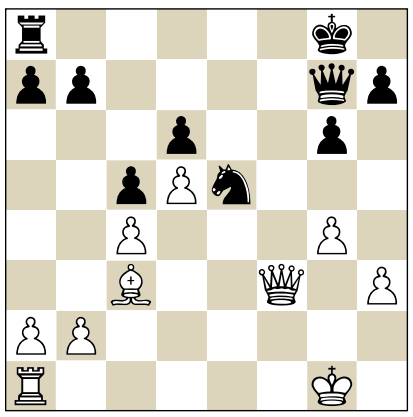
Unfortunately for Black, after 20...♖f8, 21.d8♕! is winning, as after 21...♕d4+ 22.♔g2 ♕e4+ 23.♔g3 ♕e5+ now 24.♔h4! is possible, with a winning position after 24...♖xd8 25.♕xd3.
20.♕xd3 ♘f6 21.♕f3 ♕g7



22.♗d2?! This natural move wastes a big part of White's advantage. I rejected 22.♗f4 because of 22...♖e8, and now, after 23.♗xd6, 23...♘e4 is very strong for Black.
But instead of taking the pawn, 23.♖f1! is the way to go, when after

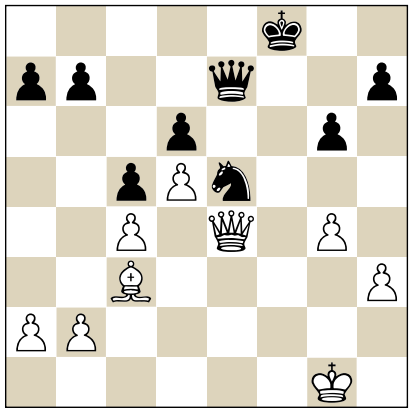
23...♘e4 24.♗h6 ♕e7 25.♔g2 White is close to winning.

22...♘d7 23.♗c3 ♘e5



24.♕e4 White is still better, of course, but now it is not clear if the advantage is still enough for a win. Black's next move is a mistake, according to my computer engine, which believes that 24...♖e8 is stronger and that Black should not exchange the rooks.

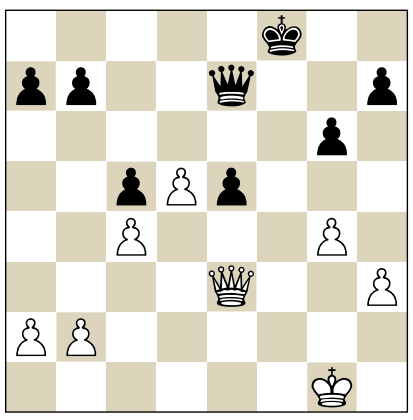
24...♖f8 25.♖f1 ♕e7 26.♖xf8+ ♔xf8



27.♗xe5! I was afraid that 27.♔f2 ♘f7 28.♕xe7+ ♔xe7 is just a fortress. Therefore it seemed to me that White has more chances in the queen ending, due to the strong passed pawn on d5.

27...dxe5 28.♕e3

Not allowing 28...♕g5.

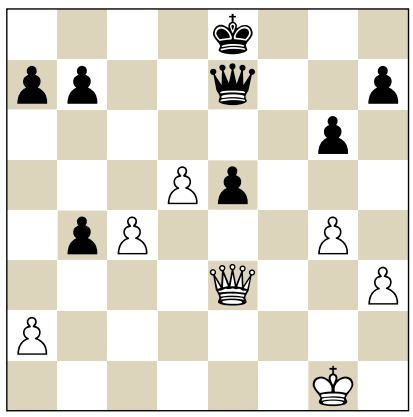


DAVID LLADA

Veselin Topalov's rivalry with Alexander Morozevich has been quite one-sided lately. Following three wins in the previous Grand Prix, the Bulgarian won again in Bilbao.

28...♕d6 This ending is indeed very complex and interesting. It is not clear if Black should go for a passive defence or look for active counter-play. The main moves for him were 28...♔e8, 28...b6 and 28...e4.

I believe that 28...♔e8 was a good try, as now 29.b4?! (instead, 29.g5! is strong, followed by h4 and activating the queen) 29...cxb4!



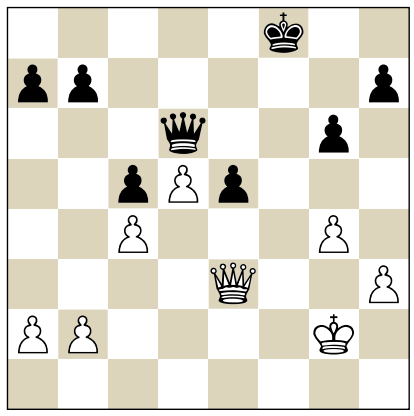
ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

30.♕xa7 ♕g5! gives Black counter-play.

After 28...b6 29.g5 Black faces similar problems. Note that 29.g5 is needed, as, for example, 29.♔g2 ♔e8 30.♔f3 ♕f6+ 31.♔e4 g5, followed by 32...♕f4, leads to an equal pawn ending

And, finally, another try was 28...e4, but I don't think that's very human. For example, after 29.♕f4+ ♔g8 30.g5 e3 31.♔f1 Black has to play 31...b5 to stay in the game.

29.♔g2



29...♔g8?

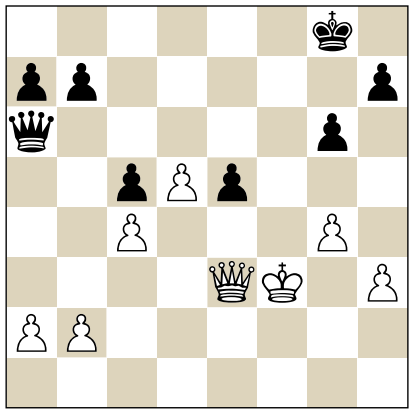
Black puts his king on the worst square. Better was 29...b6, with the same idea that if 30.♔f3 ♕f6+ 31.♔e4, 31...g5! leads to a draw. But of course White has to play 30.g5! with a serious advantage.

30.♔f3

Now the difference is that if 30...♕f6+ 31.♔e4 g5, White has 32.d6! ♕xd6 and 33.♕xg5+ check!

30...♕a6

This allows an elegant finish.



31.♔e4! ♕xc4+ 32.♔xe5 ♕xa2 33.♔e6
The strong passed pawn combined with mating threats decides the game.
33...♕xb2 34.♕f3 ♔g7 35.g5
Black resigned.

■ ■ ■

In Round 4 things started getting interesting – we had to play the defending champions, the G-team from Novy Bor. By way of preparation for this important encounter I decided to eat outside the hotel. Despite the presence of some quite strong reserve players and the knowledge that my team could probably do without me, I felt compelled to avoid the murky cuisine of the hotel restaurant and thus to stay alive for the time being. It instantly paid off. As you can conclude from the following game, there can be no doubt that the player with the black pieces had finally had a normal meal.

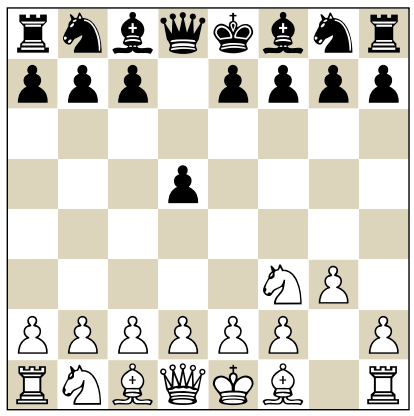
NOTES BY
Anish Giri

RE 22.4 – A09
Viktor Laznicka
Anish Giri
Bilbao 2014 (4)

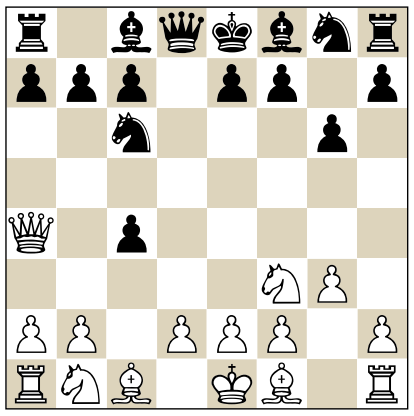
1.♘f3
Viktor Laznicka is usually a 1.d4 player, but since he used 1.f4 in his last-round Olympiad game against none other than Gabriel Sargissian, a highly respected Armenian player, nothing could surprise me any longer.
1...d5
Against those who try to avoid the Grünfeld I usually play 1...♘f6 or 1...c5 here, but Viktor was trying to avoid not only the Grünfeld, but all my openings, which is not really fair.

> 'There can be no doubt that the player with the black pieces had finally had a normal meal.'

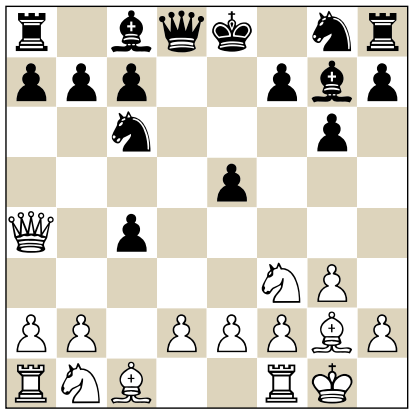
2.g3
I hadn't expected Viktor to go for the Réti, but fortunately I had quite some ideas to choose from.



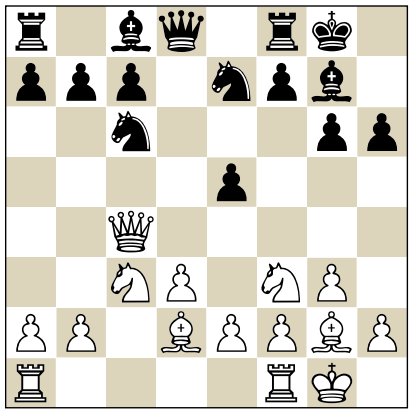
2...g6!?
This system was made especially fashionable by Anand, who gained two pleasant positions with it in his match against Carlsen. It didn't help him in the match, but it did help the rest of us in our quest of fighting the annoying Réti Opening.
3.c4 dxc4
This was Vishy's point, not to allow all kinds of options after the solid ...c6.
4.♕a4+ ♘c6
My opponent was taking his time on every move and eventually we transposed to one of the games from the Carlsen-Anand match. I don't know what can be concluded from that, possibly that Viktor wasn't one of Carlsen's secret seconds?



5.♗g2
5.♘e5? ♕d5... ouch.
5...♗g7 6.0-0
6.♘c3 ♘h6!? was apparently played by SOCAR's team captain back in 1988!
6...e5
Here 6...♘h6!? is also an interesting idea. The knight is heading for f5 straightaway.



7.♕xc4
Another option is a fun line starting with 7.♘xe5!? ♗xe5 8.♗xc6+ bxc6 9.♕xc6+ ♗d7 10.♕e4! f6 11.f4 ♗f5, which first occurred back in 1991 and was re-introduced recently in some reasonably highly rated blitz and rapid games.
7...♘ge7 8.d3 h6
A little too clever. I had probably mixed up the move order, because right now I really don't understand the reason for this move before the natural kingside castling.
9.♘c3 0-0 10.♗d2



10...♗e6!

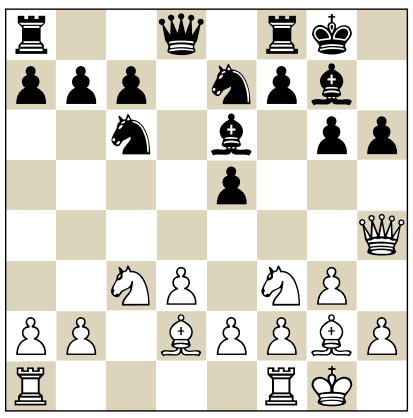
I would definitely have followed Anand, if I hadn't been told by a colleague of mine that Vishy had actually mixed up the move order.

Vishy went 10...♘d4 11.♘xd4 exd4 12.♘e4, and now Black has no time for 12...♗e6, but after the solid 12...c6 Anand was OK as well in his third game against Carlsen (after 12...♗e6? there is 13.♕c1! ♔h7 14.♘c5, and Black loses a pawn).

11.♕h4?!

This move annoyed me at first, as I was in no mood to swap the queens with the natural 11...♘f5. Instead, I had another idea in mind.

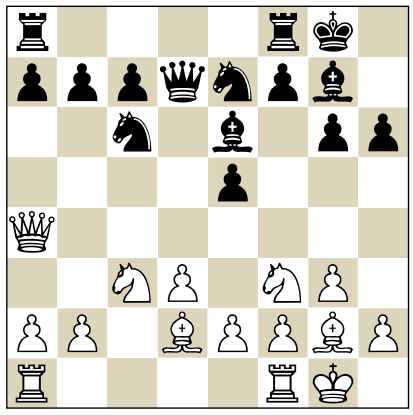
On the other hand, 11.♕a4 ♘d4 also leads to a good position for Black.



11...♕d7! Setting up ...♘f5 after ♗xh6. 11...g5? loses at once after 12.♗xg5 hxg5 13.♘xg5 ♗f5 14.♗e4! ♕d7 15.g4!.

12.♕a4 I remember someone (possibly myself, but I was probably beaten to it by someone else) writing somewhere how impressive it is that Magnus Carlsen is able to admit his minor mistakes and move back ♖cc1 after playing ♖c2, without any hesitation. This became a new trend, and now the top players, headed by Nakamura and Topalov, are doing this rather proudly. Viktor also went back to the queenside with his queen. He was probably afraid that the queen might be cut off after ...♘d4.

12.♘e4? looks good at first, but after 12...g5! it turns out that White doesn't have the right piece sacrifice available. After 13.♗xg5 (13.♘exg5 hxg5 14.♘xg5 ♗f5 doesn't work either) 13...♘g6! is a trivial refutation.



12...f5! Gaining space and stopping ♘e4. In fact, the position is a g3-system against the Sicilian Dragon with reversed colours!

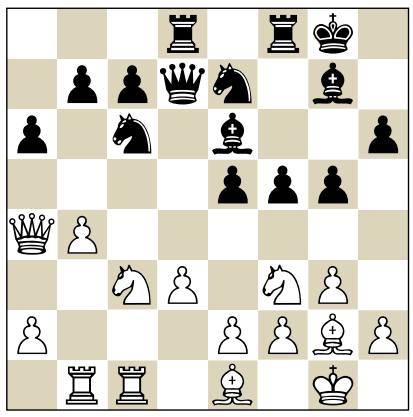
13.♖fc1 ♖ad8 I thought that 13...a6 at once would have been stronger, but my hand played the text by itself.

14.b4 Here I told myself: I knew 13...a6 was right.

14...a6 15.♖ab1 g5 When I was young and promising, I used to make such moves instantly, but after Norway Chess 2014, where Fabiano Caruana called my move ...g5 in a similar position a weakening of my own king, I am having to think twice. Still, it seems that I will never learn.

16.♗e1

Preparing ♘d2.



NEW IN CHESS

Anish Giri was happy with his own result and proud of the great efforts of his SOCAR teammates: 'Otsukaresama deshita!'

16...♘d5! Indirectly highlighting the weakness of the e2-square and in a way destabilizing White's queen on a4. This is a common motif in the Dragon with the queens on d2/a5 with colours reversed, where ♘d5 (here ...♘d4) is often a tactical idea.

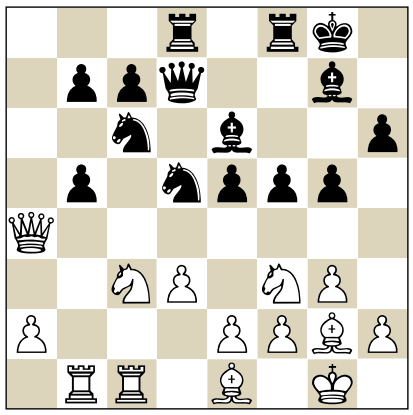
Here my opponent sank into deep thought. After a very long think, he still failed to come up with a good solution, as surprisingly White is already under serious pressure.

17.b5

The alternative was 17.♘xd5 ♗xd5, and then I thought a possible option would have been 18.e4 (18.♘d2 can be met by a cute tactic: 18...♘d4!? 19.♕xd7? ♘xe2+ 20.♔f1 ♗xg2+!) but after the simple 18...♗e6! Black stands slightly better, with the knight heading for the d4-square, and the

d3-pawn being very vulnerable. (18...fxe4 19.dxe4 ♗xe4?! leads to equality: 20.♘xe5 ♘xe5 21.♕xd7 ♖xd7 22.♗xe4 ♘f3+.)

17...axb5

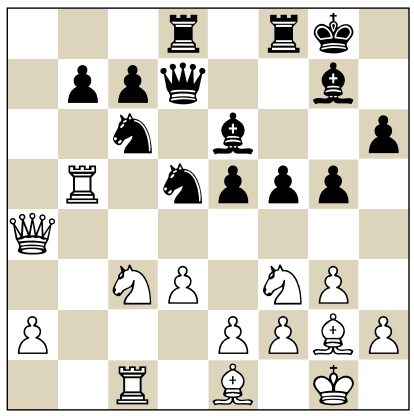


18.♖xb5?

Asking for trouble. White lacks coordination now, and although there is no way for Black to win material by force, it's clear that something is wrong with White's set-up.

18.♕xb5 isn't ideal either, but it was a better way to enter the complications: 18...e4 19.dxe4 ♘xc3 20.♗xc3 ♗xc3 21.♖xc3 fxe4.

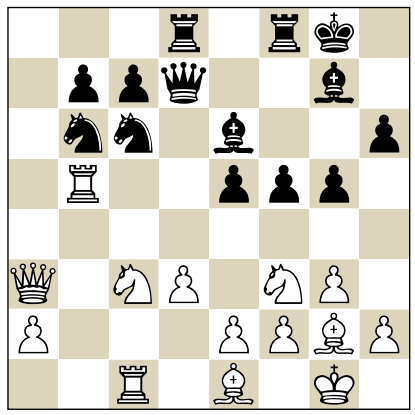
18.♘xb5 doesn't look very attractive, with the knight standing in the way of the b1-rook, but it would have been the most practical decision, as there is no way for Black to exploit his control in the centre. Nevertheless, Black stands very well, controlling the centre and enjoying quite some space now.



18...♘b6!

18...e4? seemed winning at first, but I quickly realized that this was exactly what my opponent was counting on: 19.dxe4 ♘xc3 20.♗xc3 ♗xc3 21.exf5! disrupting all Black's plans. 22.♕b3+ is the idea after 21...♗xf5. (21.♖xc3 indeed loses: 21...♕d1+ 22.♕xd1 ♖xd1+ 23.♗f1 fxe4.)

19.♕a3 The only move. 19.♕d1 e4! is trouble: 20.dxe4 ♕xd1 21.♘xd1 fxe4 22.♘d2 ♘d4!.



19...♖a8 Here I spent a lot of time trying to find a forced win. Something in the style of 19...e4!? 20.dxe4 ♘c4 21.♕a4! or 19...♖a8 20.♕c5 e4!?

Bilbao 2014

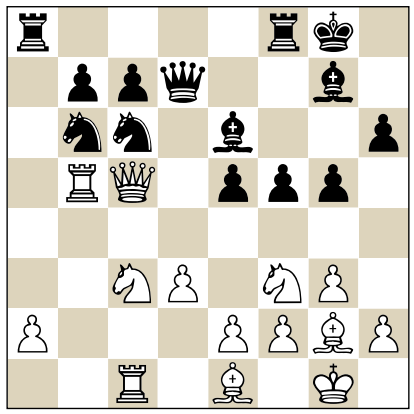
1	SOCAR Azerbaijan	AZE	14
2	G-Team Novy Bor	CZE	12
3	Malakhite	RUS	11
4	Odlar Yourdu	AZE	10
5	SG Solingen	GER	10
6	SHSM Nashe Nasledie	RUS	10
7	Minsk	BLR	10
8	Ladya	RUS	10
9	SPB	RUS	9
10	Obiettivo Risarcimento	ITA	9
11	Beer Sheva	ISR	9
12	SK Dunajska Streda	SVK	9
13	SK Team Viking	SWE	9
14	KSK47-Eynatten	BEL	9
15	Sestao Naturgas Energia	ESP	8
16	Gros Xake Taldea	ESP	8
17	LSG	NED	8
18	Huginn Chessclub	ISL	8
19	Haladas VSE	HUN	8
20	Schachgesellschaft Zurich	SUI	8
21	Solvay	ESP	8
22	En Passant	NED	8
23	Bronshoj Skakforening	DEN	8
24	SK Hohenems	AUT	7
25	Royal Salzburg	AUT	7
26	SV Mülheim Nord	GER	7
27	Margiris Kaunas	LTU	7
28	Cercle d'Echecs Fontainois	BEL	7
29	CE de Spenger Echternach	LUX	7
30	Oslo Schakselskap	NOR	6
31	HMC Calder	NED	6
32	The Smashing Pawns Belvaux	LUX	6
33	SK Rockaden	SWE	6
34	Cercle d'Echecs de Bois Colombes	FRA	6
35	KSK Rochade Eupen-Kelmis	BEL	6
36	Grantham Sharks	ENG	6
37	Asker	NOR	6
38	Gambit Asseco SEE	MKD	6
39	Edinburgh	SCO	6
40	Schachfreunde Berlin	GER	5
41	White Rose	ENG	5
42	Shakkivelhot	FIN	5
43	Bon Accord	SCO	5
44	Cercle d'Echecs de Monte-Carlo	MNC	4
45	Adare Chess Club	IRL	4
46	Matinkylan	FIN	4
47	Werder Bremen	GER	4
48	Cercle des Echecs Dudelange	LUX	4
49	Abergavenny Chess Club	WLS	4
50	Ennis Chess Club	IRL	3
51	Butrinti	ALB	1
52	White Knights	WLS	1

52 teams, 7 rounds

21.dxe4 fxe4 22.♖d1!. At the same time, Hao was starting to go crazy in his game against Bartel, while Radjabov was playing a masterpiece. Somehow it all came together and I could no longer find my focus. After a while I decided that before my brain melted from over-excitement I should just play some quiet moves without spoiling anything.

20.♕c5 Another only move.

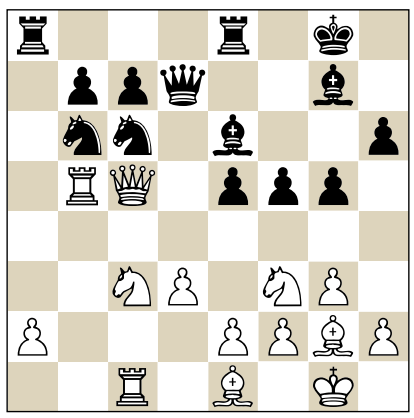
20.♕b2 runs into 20...e4!.



20...♖fe8! After deciding on my main goal, which was to prevent my brain from melting (you should have seen what was happening in that Hao game!), I started thinking about whether to play ...♖fe8 or ...♖f7. Two moves later it would turn out that I had made the right decision.

20...e4 21.dxe4 fxe4 22.♖d1! (22.♘xe4 g4! wins) is indeed not so clear.

20...g4 doesn't promise much either: 21.♘h4 e4 (threatening the cunning ...♗d4) 22.♕e3! (things like 22.♘g6 ♖fe8! 23.♘f4 ♗d4 24.♘xe4 fxe4 25.♕h5 also seemed messy, but would have been too surreal; after 25...♗g7! 26.♗xe4 ♗f7! Black is winning).



21.a4?

White had a very difficult position, but this loses by force.

21.♕e3 would have continued the fight. Now I would probably snatch the pawn, 21...♗xa2!, which I didn't fancy doing on the previous move, fearing some tactical motifs along the a2-g8 diagonal, when the queen was still on c5.

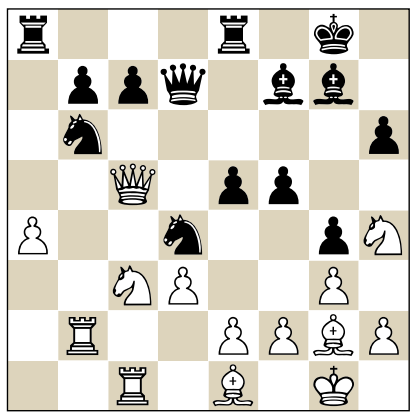
21.♔f1 looks ridiculous, but would avoid immediate disaster: 21...f4!? leads to a long and forced sequence, though, with some material gain in the end: 22.♖bb1 ♗f8 23.♕b5 ♖a5 24.♕b2 ♗a3 25.♕a1 ♗xc1 26.♘e4! (this would at least show that 20...♖fe8 wasn't such a great move after all...) 26...♖xa2! 27.♘f6+ ♔g7 28.♘xd7 ♖xa1 29.♖xa1 ♗b2 30.♖b1 ♘a4 31.♘c5 ♘xc5 32.♖xb2 ♗d5, and Black is a healthy pawn up.

21...g4! 22.♘h4 ♘d4

Juicy!

23.♖b2 ♗f7!

Now it turns out that 24...♗f8 is a deadly threat. Here I felt unusually wise – apparently my ...♖fe8 was quite useful after all!



24.♕a3

The only move was 24.♖xb6, but then again, as the saying goes, in a bad position all moves are bad.

24...♗f8 25.♕a1 ♘xa4 26.♘xa4 ♖xa4 27.♕b1 ♗a3

Black wins the house and White resigned. A pleasant victory.

Fortunately, unlike last year, when I gained a quick victory against the player of Novy Bor, Mateusz Bartel, my team joined me this time and we won the match pretty convincingly.

■ ■ ■

In that same match Teimour consolidated his excellent form by beating one of Novy Bor's stalwarts, Krishnan Sasikiran, in spectacular style.

NOTES BY
Teimour Radjabov

SI 19.16 – B80
Teimour Radjabov
Krishnan Sasikiran
Bilbao 2014 (4)

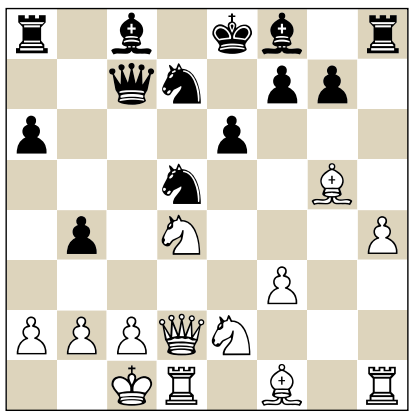
I did not play in the decisive match of the European Club Cup against Novy Bor in Rhodes last year, where we lost in the last round and did not win the title. There were no doubts about playing in the revenge battle ☺.

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 a6

The Najdorf! The battle is on!

6.f3 e6 7.♗e3 b5 8.♕d2 ♘bd7 9.g4 h6 10.0-0-0 b4 11.♘ce2 ♕c7 12.h4 d5 13.g5 hxg5 14.exd5 ♘xd5 15.♗xg5

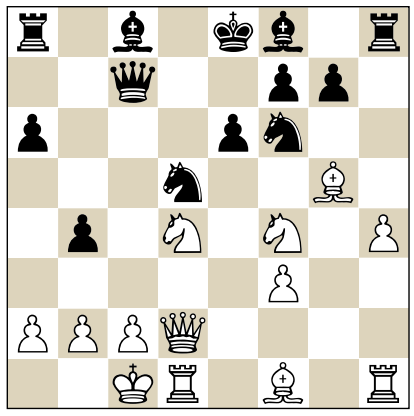
With hundreds of possible deviations starting from move 6, I am sure I could write a nice book about the previous moves, but let's start here and plunge into a line with immense complications.



15...♘7f6

If Black is able to play ...♗d6 on the next move, depriving the e2-knight of the f4-square, followed by ...♗b7 and ...0-0-0, his position will be just far better, as White has the h4/f3 weaknesses and no real threats. Time to hurry up with direct play.

16.♘f4!

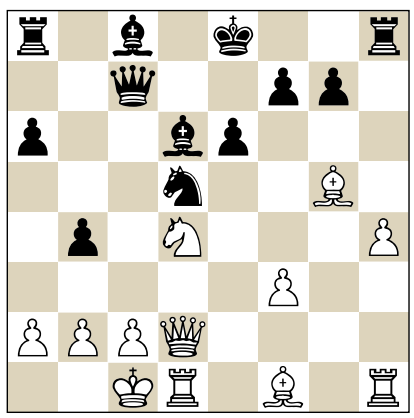


16...♗d6

16...♗b7? looks natural, but loses to 17.♘dxe6 fxe6 18.♘xe6 ♕c6 19.♗h3! ♗e7 20.♕g2 (with the idea of ♗xf6 and ♕g6+, with or without ♖he1) 20...♔f7 21.♖hg1 (21.♖he1 or 21.♘d4 was also good), and Black's position is falling apart.

16...♘xf4 would be careless: 17.♗xf4, and now White has the safer king and an attack along the open files, and Black has no real prospects.

17.♘xd5 ♘xd5

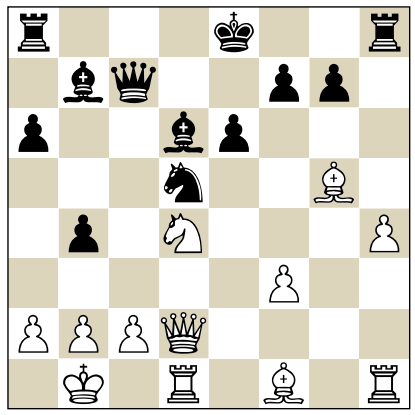


18.♔b1!?

Avoiding any ...♗f4, with a queen swap. Now Black has to deal with the king on e8. It is uncomfortable in the centre and does not feel safe on the kingside either due to the h5/♖g1 and ♗h6 ideas that are hanging in the air.

18...♗b7?

We both thought that this was a bad move, while we were analysing. In fact, it is almost losing! But figuring out why over the board and trying to remember all the subtleties, especially in the very main line, as in the game, was not at all the simplest of puzzles! ☺



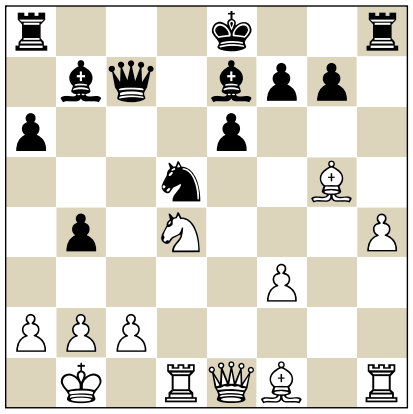
19.♕e1!? This gives Black additional possibilities.

I was sure 19.♗h3! was the move, but rejected it due to the line starting with 19...♗f4 20.♕e1 ♗xg5 and ...♘f4. In fact it is winning, and the maximum Black can get is a position with a bad king and a pawn down, which is very hard to play and almost impossible to hold. After 19.♗h3! the play continues 19...♗f4 20.♕e1 ♔f8 21.♗xe6 ♖e8 22.♗xf4 ♕xf4 23.♘e2 ♕c4 24.♗xd5 ♗xd5 25.b3 ♕c5 26.♖d3, and Black is a pawn down and his king is vulnerable.

19...♗e7

Now I had to reconsider my previous thoughts. It's time to stop Black from castling queenside. Originally my thoughts focused on 19...♗e5!? with immense complications, and 19...♔f8!? with French-Caro-Kann style ideas like ...♖e8 next to protect the king: 20.♕xe6 fxe6 21.♘xe6+ ♔f7 22.♘xc7 ♗xc7 23.♗c4 ♖ad8, and even though it looks better for White, I do not see a win here: 24.♗xd8 ♖xd8 25.h5, although White keeps some initiative.

> 'Let's plunge into a line with immense complications.'



20.♗h3!

Finally ♗h3 had started to look much more natural to me, and calculating it more deeply made me eager to enter the complications.

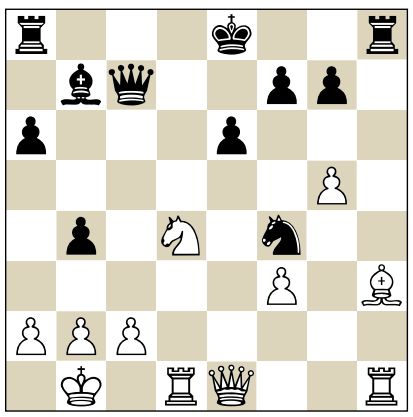
There was an interesting alternative in 20.♘xe6!? fxe6 21.♕xe6 ♖d8, and it looks like a Tal sacrifice, but I did not see what to do next. The first line that I discovered was 22.♕g6+ ♔f8 23.♗c4. This line consumed all my thoughts: 23...♕xc4 (23...♗xg5?? 24.hxg5, and White wins) 24.♗xe7+ ♔xe7 25.♕xg7+ ♔d6 26.♕xb7 ♔c5, and it's no more than a draw.

20...♗xg5?

Black's last chance was 20...e5, even though the position reminds one of ancient ruins: 21.♗xe7 (the computer claims that White is better after 21.♘f5 ♗xg5 22.hxg5 0-0-0 23.♘d6+ ♔b8 24.♘xb7 ♔xb7 25.f4 ♘xf4 26.♕xb4+ ♔a7 27.♗g4 ♖xh1 28.♖xh1 ♖d4 29.♕e1, and although the black king is definitely worse than the white one, it all looks unclear to me) 21...♘xe7 22.♘b3 f5 23.♕g3, and White is very much on top.

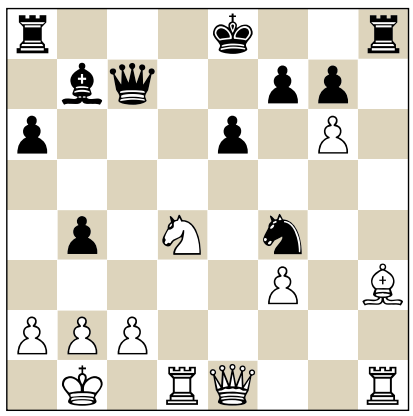
21.hxg5 ♘f4

This all looks logical, but there is one important nuance...



22.g6! This wins! There is no mate on h8 after 22.♗xe6?? as the black king escapes to f7, so 22...♖xh1 23.♕xh1 (23.♗d7+ loses to 23...♔xd7 24.♘b5+ ♗d5) 23...fxe6 24.♕h8+ ♔f7, and Black wins.

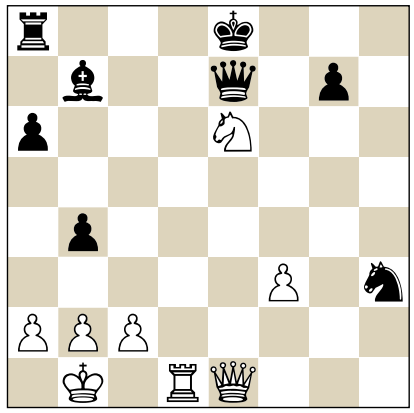
On 22.♘f5? Black has the simple 22...♗xf3 23.♗g2 ♖xh1 24.♕xh1 exf5 25.♗xf3 ♖c8, and although there is some vague initiative, it eventually all seems to end in a draw.



22...0-0-0 The alternative was 22...♖xh3 23.♖xh3 ♘xh3 24.gxf7+ ♕xf7 25.♘xe6 ♕e7

NEW IN CHESS

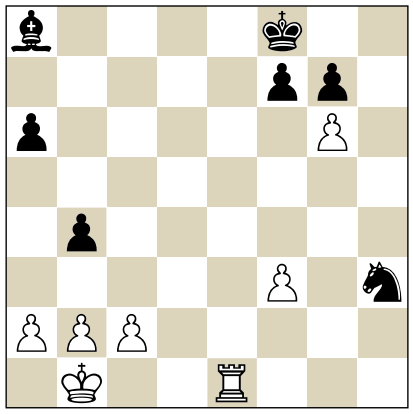
There was no way Teimour Radjabov was going to miss the revenge match of SOCAR against last-year's winners Novy Bor.



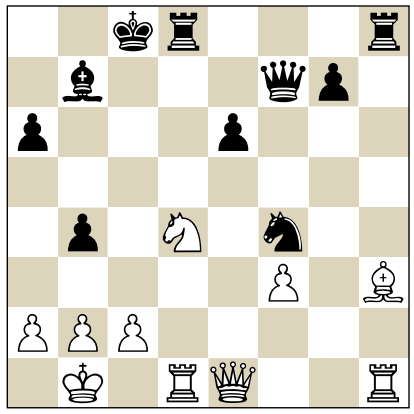
ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

26.♕e5! (White should not go 26.♕g3?? ♕xe6 27.♖e1, and you may think that you are winning..., but there is 27...0-0-0!! and Black wins) 26...♘g5 27.♘xg7+ ♔f7 28.♕f5+ ♔g8 29.♘h5! ♖f8 30.♕g6+ ♔h8 31.♕h6+ ♘h7 32.♘f4, winning.

Let's look at 24.♘xe6? (instead of 24.gxf7+) just to show the beautiful win after 24...♕e7 25.♘c7+. There is a very beautiful motif at the end of this line: 25...♔f8 26.♘xa8 ♕xe1 (26...♗xa8 27.♕g3, winning) 27.♖xe1 ♗xa8



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM



28.♖h1! and then check on h8 and take on a8, a beautiful line that I was happy to discover over the board ☺.

Also losing was 22...♘xh3 23.♘xe6 fxe6 24.♕xe6+ ♕e7 25.♕b3! and then ♖de1 or ♖he1, depending on Black's reply.

23.gxf7 ♕xf7

My opponent seemed to feel fine about his position, probably counting on ♘xe6, as he was very surprised when I played my next move.

24.♕xb4!

Both captures on e6 were bad: 24.♗xe6+? ♘xe6 25.♖xh8 ♖xh8 26.♘xe6 ♕xf3! and Black will be a pawn down in the endgame, but it's hard for White to convert this small material advantage.

And after 24.♘xe6?! ♖xd1+ 25.♕xd1 ♘xh3 26.♖xh3 ♖e8 White is sure to be a pawn up as well, but I have big doubts about my winning chances.

24...♘xh3?

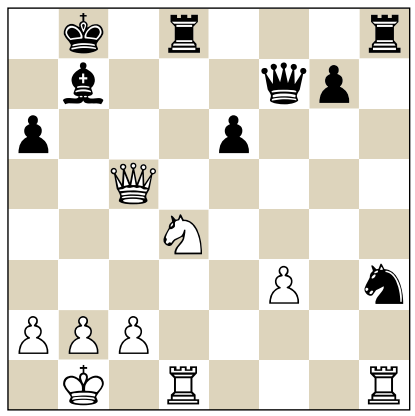
Surely more tenacious was 24...♕d7! 25.♕c4+ ♔b8 26.♘c6+ ♕xc6 27.♕xf4+ ♕c7 28.♕g4, when White is close to winning, but still some technique is needed.

Just bad was 24...♖xh3?? 25.♖xh3 e5 26.♖h4! g5 27.♖xf4 gxf4 28.♕c5+, and White wins.

25.♕c5+

An important subtlety!

25...♔b8



26.♖xh3

Also winning was 26.♘c6+, but way too hard!: 26...♗xc6 27.♕b6+

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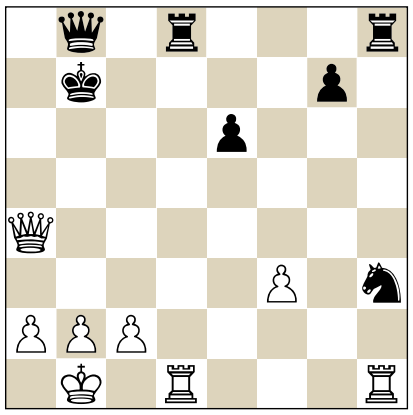
♔c8 28.♕xc6+ ♕c7! (if 28...♔b8 29.♕b6+ ♔c8 30.♕xa6+ ♔b8 31.♕b6+ ♔c8, 32.♖d3! and wins. That was a line I was very proud of until I discovered that Black has a better defence with 28...♕c7) 29.♕a8+ ♕b8 30.♕xa6+ ♔c7 31.♕c4+ ♔b7 32.♕e4+ ♔a7 33.♕a4+ ♔b7



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

And here is the move that stunned all our brave SOCAR players at the evening's team-meeting: 34.a3!! No, don't worry, I had not seen this sequence, which seems to be only way to win the game outright (♕a6-c4-e4-a4, and then the pawn move to a3. Bravo!) 34...♕c7 35.♕b4+ ♔a8 36.♕e4+ ♔b8 37.♖xd8+ ♕xd8 38.♕g4! and wins.

26...♕d7

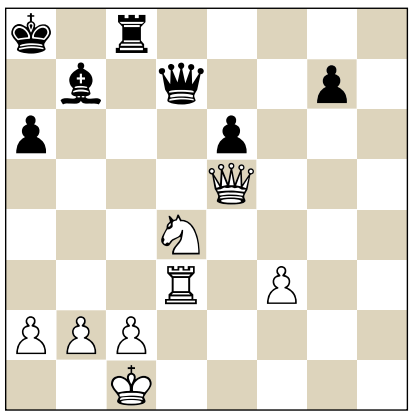
Or 26...♖xh3 27.♘c6+ ♗xc6 28.♕b6+! with mate.

27.♖xh8 ♖xh8 28.♕e5+ ♔a8 29.♔c1

29.f4! would have won on the spot.

29...♖c8 30.♖d3

The rest is a matter of technique. There are a few ways on each move to win the game, but I will not analyse these deeply, if you do not mind ☺.



30...♕a4 31.♔b1 ♖h8 32.b3 ♕a3 33.♖d1

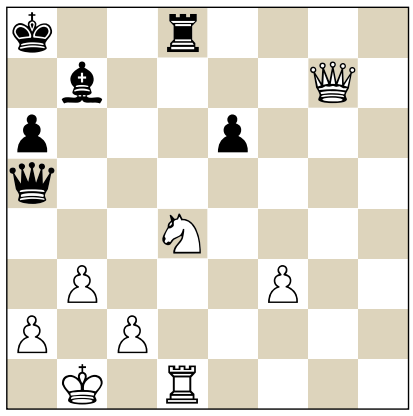
No, no need to allow mate now.

33...♖d8 34.♖d3 ♖h8 35.♖d1 ♖d8 36.♕xg7

And no draw of course.

36...♕a5

On 36...♗xf3 White plays 37.♖d3, followed by ♘b5 (and not 37.♕f6?? ♖f8, and it all ends in perpetual check, which is not what I want to achieve here).



37.♕g1

Some equilibristic skills!

37...e5 38.♘e6 ♖c8 39.♕e3 ♖c3 40.♖d8+ ♕xd8 41.♕xc3 ♕f6 42.♘c5 Black resigned in view of 42...♗xf3 43.♘d7 or 43.♘d3.

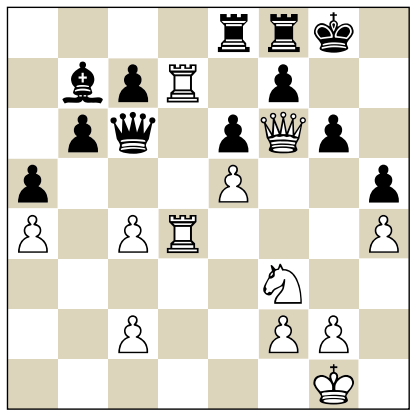
We won this match and took revenge for last year's disappointing loss with our overall victory. A very nice achievement!

■ ■ ■

Now that we had won all our first four matches and were having dinner outside the hotel, you may think that life was a bowl of cherries. But we weren't quite there yet. The fight continued the next day when we faced our main enemy – Obiettivo Risarcimento. As preparation for my game against Bacrot, I decided to use another secret weapon of mine, a *jamon* sandwich for lunch. However, I may have started eating it from the wrong end, because the secret weapon didn't work and after the time-control I ended up on the defensive side and only survived by sheer and unexpected luck. Our club manager, who had arrived just before this match, gave me an excessively tough shoulder tap and called me a hooligan after the game. Indeed, every game was crucial that day, and it was only thanks to Veselin's marathon win against Nakamura that we won this important match. It is hard to say how lucky we were, as Mamedyarov, who lost, could have drawn his game against the Don at some point. Still, one thing is certain: Lady Fortune was on our side that day.

Quite surprisingly, our next match against 'Malakhite' turned out to be a walk in the park. In a fluke coincidence, all our opponents played badly. At some point, after beating Malakhov, I even started dreaming of 6-0. The final result was 5-1, so I wasn't too far off. Michael Adams beat Shirov in his classical style. At dinner he took out his score-sheets (note the 's' at the end!) and in his usual laid-back manner said something like 'Ehm, 125 moves. That wasn't such a short game after all'.

That day must have been a big blow for Nigel Short. Not only did his British nemesis do so well, but on Board 6 Wang Hao attempted to strip him of the title of most impressive king-runner in the history of our sport. For those of you who have forgotten:



Short-Timman
Tilburg 1991
position after 30...h5

31.♔h2! ♖c8 32.♔g3! ♖ce8 33.♔f4! ♗c8 34.♔g5! and Black resigned, as mate cannot be prevented.

Here is Wang Hao's variation on this theme.

NOTES BY
Wang Hao

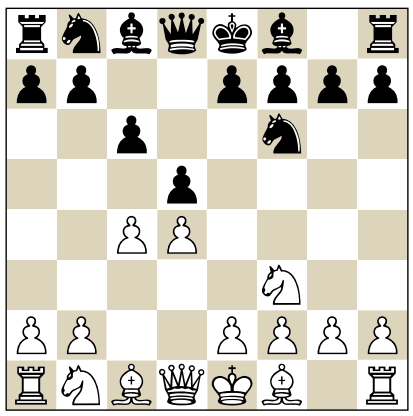
SL 3.4 – D16
Wang Hao
Viktor Bologan
Bilbao 2014 (6)

1.c4 I was planning to play slowly and calmly, so the English was the first idea on my mind.

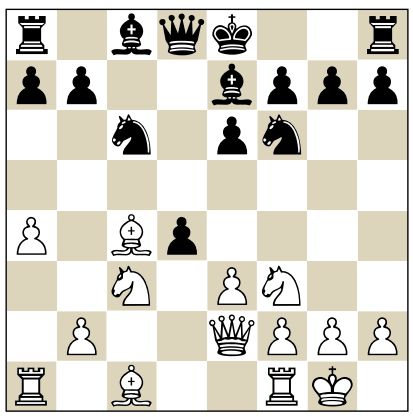
1...c6 A big surprise! My opponent usually plays 1...c5 and 1...e5 against the English. And I was ready to follow his game against Khairullin in Round 4, which started with a Symmetrical English.

2.♘f3 d5 3.d4 ♘f6

The Slav Defence. It's not Viktor's common weapon, but it's super-solid indeed.



4.♘c3 dxc4 5.a4 e6 6.e3 c5 7.♗xc4 ♘c6 8.0-0 ♗e7 9.♕e2 cxd4



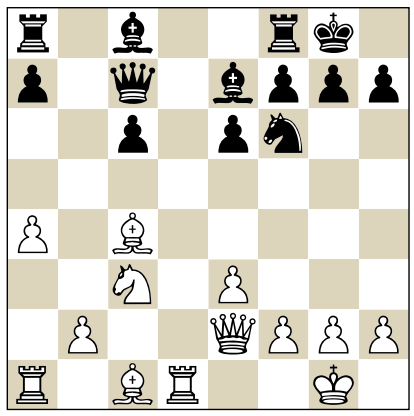
10.♖d1 The main move. However, it's not necessary.

10.♘xd4 is probably a better try: 10...♗d7 11.♘f3!? was an interesting continuation by L'Ami last year. In his game against Ernst, he got a slight advantage after 11...0-0 12.e4.

10...0-0 11.♘xd4 ♕c7

White has a slight but enjoyable advantage after 11...♘xd4 12.exd4.

12.♘xc6 bxc6



13.a5 A logical move, trying to stop ...a5 and ...♗b7.

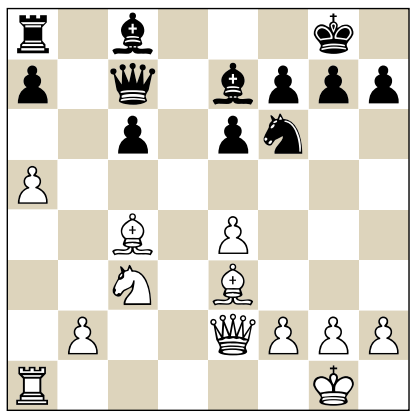
13.b3 is somehow more common but totally harmless, Black can successfully equalize with 13...♗b7 14.♗b2 ♖fd8.

13.e4 deserves more attention.

13...♖d8 Also a logical reply – Black tries to gain more space by exchanging a pair of rooks.

It's bad to put the light-squared bishop on b7 with 13...a6?! 14.e4 ♗b7 15.g3 c5 16.f3, because it only creates weaknesses for Black.

14.♖xd8+ ♗xd8 15.e4 ♗e7 16.♗e3

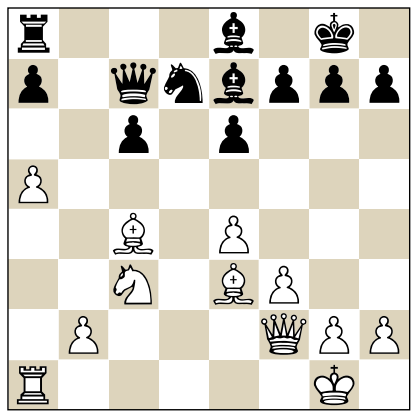


16...♗d7?!

The light-squared bishop is perfect on c8. Black should have countered immediately to stop White from coordinating his pieces.

16...♖b8 was probably right: 17.f3 ♖b4! 18.b3 ♘d7, and Black is fine.

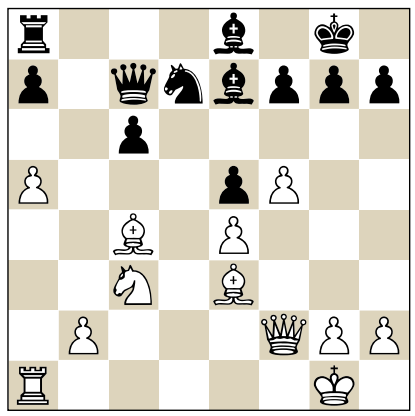
17.f3 ♗e8 18.♕f2 ♘d7



19.f4?!

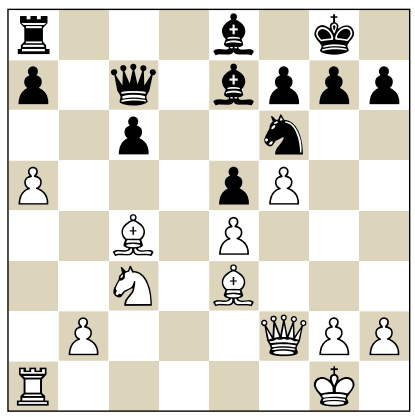
19.♗f1 is probably the best way to keep the advantage. Black doesn't have any useful plans, so he will probably play moves like ...♕b8 or ...♘e5. Still, Black is very solid, my Stockfish only gives +0.31 for White...

19...e5! 20.f5



20...♘f6!

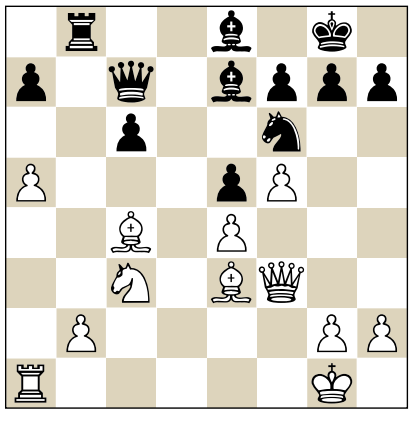
I had overlooked this simple move. The immediate threat is ...♘g4 and I have to stop it right now. Also ...♗b4 is coming to attack my a5- and e4-pawns at the same time. Annoying!



21.♕f3?! I had been planning to play 21.h3!, but after seeing 21...♗b4 22.a6 ♗xc3? (22...♖d8! is probably the best move here. After 23.♖b1! – 23.♗xa7? c5 – 23...h6 24.♔h1 ♔h7

25.♕c2 the position is roughly equal, although it seems that only White can try to push) 23.bxc3 ♘xe4 24.♕f3 ♘xc3? – I stopped my calculation here. Actually, Black is in trouble after the simple 25.♖c1, so 24...♘f6 is probably called for. Although he is a pawn down, the bishop pair, combined with Black's weaknesses, offers White huge compensation. After 25.♖b1 White is on top.

21...♖b8

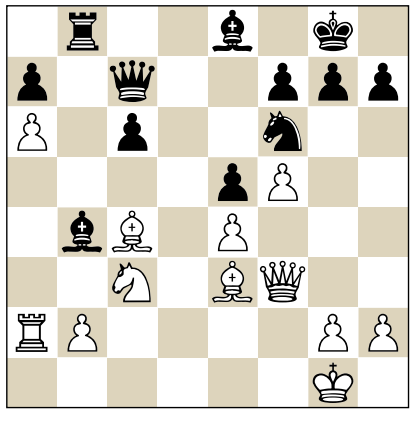


22.♖a2

I decided to keep my pawns. I was thinking about 22.g4: after 22...♖xb2 23.g5 ♘d7 24.f6?! (a strange position arises after 24.♕h5! ♘f8 25.♕d1, which is somehow equal according to Stockfish) 24...♗c5 25.♗xc5 ♘xc5 I couldn't find a path to continue my attack.

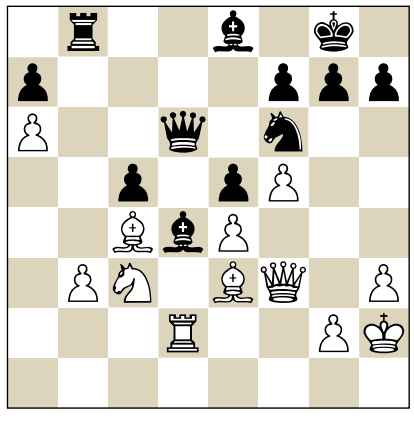
The brave 22.b3!? is my Stockfish's first suggestion – after 22...♗b4 23.♘d1 ♗xa5 24.g4 ♘d7 25.♘f2 ♗b6 26.g5, the position is really complicated.

22...♗b4 23.a6



23...♗xc3

My opponent was confident here, playing this move without thinking. Actually, 23...♕d6 deserved more attention. The position is very unclear after 24.h3 ♗c5 25.b3 ♗d4 26.♖d2 c5 27.♔h2.

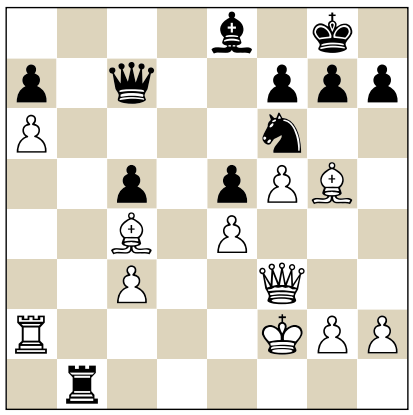


ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

23...♕e7 was my idea during the game. After 24.h3 ♗c5 25.♕f2 ♗xe3 26.♕xe3 ♖d8 27.b3 ♖d4 28.♔h2 we have a roughly equal position.

24.bxc3 ♖b1+ 25.♔f2 c5 26.♗g5

Forced, as ♗c6 is coming and then e4 will fall.



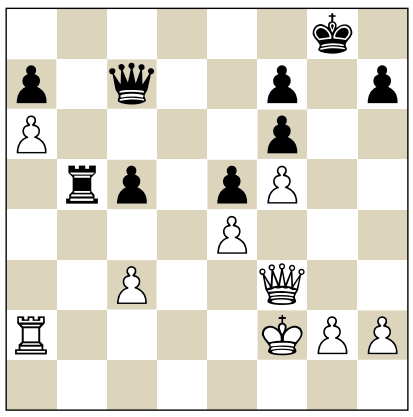
26...♗b5?!

I don't like this move, as it forces Black to defend a slightly worse endgame, although the position is not far from equal.

26...♕c6 is what I thought over the board. After 27.♗xf6 ♕xf6 28.g3 ♕h6 29.♔g2 ♕c1 30.♔h3 ♕h6+, with a draw.

27.♗xf6 gxf6 28.♗xb5 ♖xb5

The position is indeed equal here. However, I managed to discover an interesting and hidden idea...



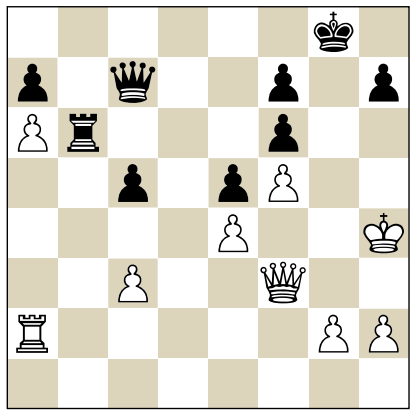
29.♔g3! A nice move, with the idea of ♔h4-h5-h6, or g4 and h4 after ♔h5. If Black goes ...♔f8 I can even try to capture the h7-pawn with my king. It's amazing that my king is totally safe on enemy territory!

29...♖b6?

My opponent seemed to be trying to get the initiative, but I thought that the rook just went to the wrong side.

29...♖a5! is very necessary: 30.♕e2 (30.♖d2 leads to an unclear endgame: 30...♔f8 31.♕h5 ♖xa6 32.♕xh7 ♔e7, and White has no advantage here) 30...♖xa2 31.♕xa2 ♕b6 32.♕c4 ♕d6, and it must be a draw.

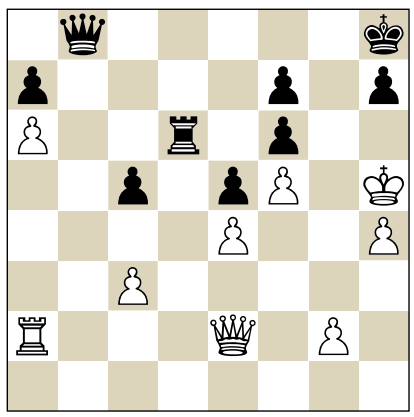
30.♔h4!



30...♖d6?!

A bad move, offering the b-file to my rook. But it was already difficult to suggest an alternative here.

31.♔h5 ♕b8 32.♕e2 ♔h8 33.h4



NEW IN CHESS

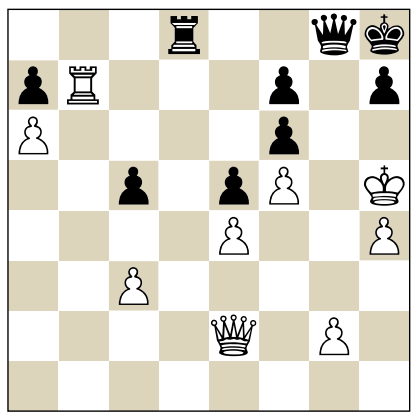
Wang Hao remains a mysterious player, yet incredibly strong and imaginative. Don't miss his amazing king march. 'Totally safe in enemy territory!'

33...♕g8?

This move allows ♖b2 and ♖b7, and Black will face a deadly threat. Anyway, it was understandable, as both players were in time-trouble.

33...♕d8 is better, but Black is under pressure after 34.g4.

34.♖b2! ♖d8 35.♖b7??



In time-pressure, I blundered badly. 35.g4! simply puts paid to Black's hopes.

35...c4??

It's amazing that the miraculous 35...♕g3!! saves Black.

After 36.♖xf7 ♖g8 37.♖xf6, Black has 37...♕g7! 38.♖e6 ♕f7+ 39.♔h6 ♕g7+, and my king cannot avoid the checks.

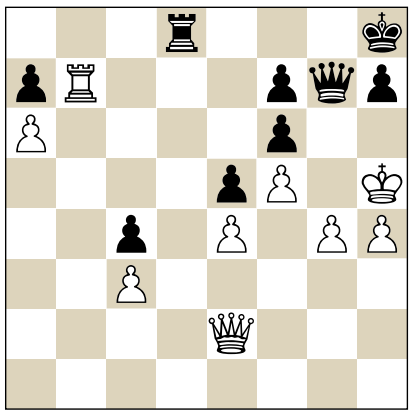
36.♕f3 ♕e1! 37.♖xf7 ♖g8 38.c4! (38.g4?? ♕d2 39.♖xf6 ♖g5+! 40.hxg5 ♕h2+, winning) 38...♖g3 39.♖xh7+! is stalemate after 39...♔xh7 (39...♔g8 40.♖xa7 ♖xf3 41.gxf3 looks dangerous for Black, but anyway it's very drawish) 40.♕xg3 ♕xg3!.

36.g4

White is winning again.

36...♕g7

36...♖d3 37.♕h2! ♖xc3 38.♖xa7, and wins.



37.g5

37.♕xc4 ♖g8 38.g5 is simpler.

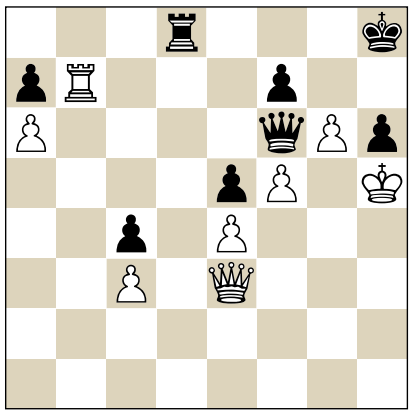
37.♖xa7 also wins.

37...fxg5 38.hxg5 h6

Or 38...♖g8 39.♕g4 ♕f8 40.♖xa7, and wins.

39.g6 ♕f6 40.♕e3

After gaining 30 minutes with this move, the rest became simple.



40...fxg6+ 41.fxg6 ♔g8 42.♖f7 ♕d6

42...♖d3 43.♖xf6 ♖xe3 44.♔xh6 ♖xc3 45.♖c6, and White wins.

43.♕f3 ♖d7 44.♕f1 ♖c7 45.♖xc7 ♕xc7 46.♔xh6 ♕g7+ 47.♔g5 ♕e7+ 48.♕f6

Black resigned.

■ ■ ■

Let me show you one more game from our demolition of 'Malakhite'. On top board, Shakhriyar Mamedyarov inflicted a painful defeat on Sergey Karjakin.

NOTES BY
Anish Giri

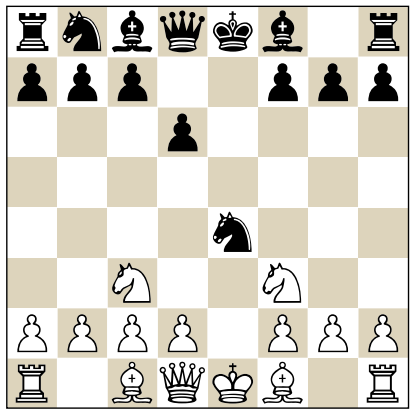
RG 3.5 – C42
Sergey Karjakin
Shakhriyar Mamedyarov
Bilbao 2014 (6)

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘f6

Shakhriyar had already won games with the Petroff; against Karjakin (last year) and a couple of days ago against Nepomniachtchi. Peculiar, as the opening is known for its solidity, although yours truly, too, scored some memorable wins with it.

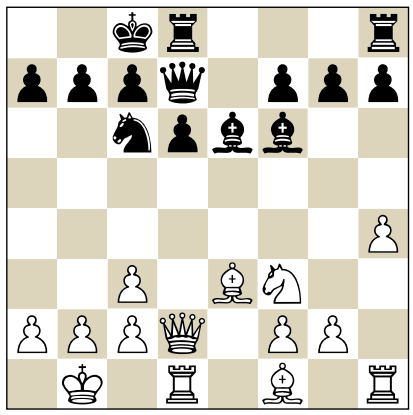
3.♘xe5 d6 4.♘f3 ♘xe4 5.♘c3

The topical line that I spent half my chess career analysing.



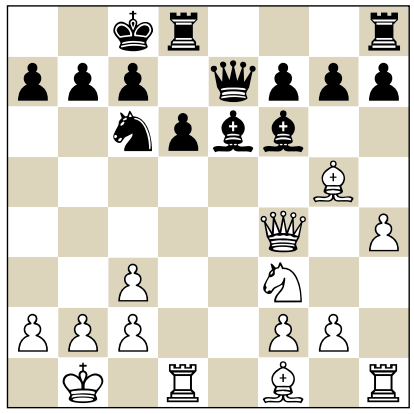
5...♘xc3 6.dxc3 ♗e7 7.♗e3 ♘c6 8.♕d2 ♗e6 9.0-0-0 ♕d7 10.♔b1 ♗f6 11.h4 0-0-0

Another way is 11...h6.

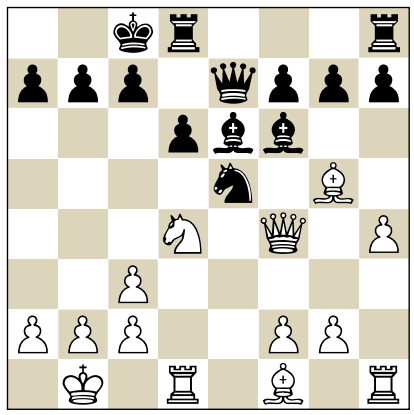


12.♗g5 A typical way of trying to pose problems.

12...♕e7 13.♕f4

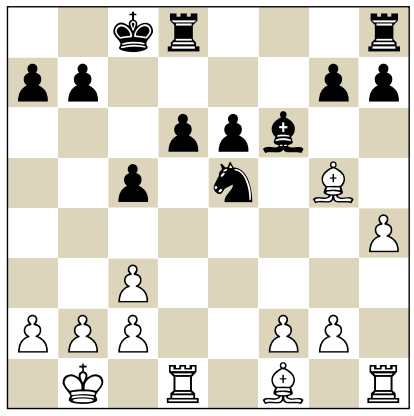


13...♘e5!? After the primitive 13...h6 Mamedyarov feared a long defence in what looks like a slightly worse endgame. **14.♘d4**



14...c5!? Played quite quickly, but it looks a little bit too shaky to be the product of opening preparation.

15.♘f5 ♗xf5 16.♕xf5+ ♕e6 17.♕xe6+ fxe6



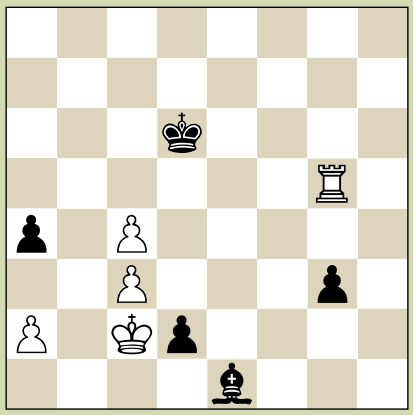
18.♗c1! Now White keeps two bishops and potential pressure on the e6-pawn. In return, Black is still quite solid, although there is no doubt that he stands worse.

18...♘g4 19.♖d2 h5!?

Memory Lane

Jan Timman

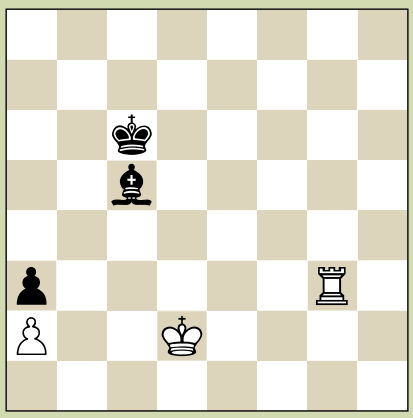
When following team competitions online, you inevitably have to spread your concentration over many games. During the final round of the European Club championship in Bilbao, one of the endgames drew my special attention.



Dominguez-Rodshtein
Bilbao 2014 (6)
position after 39...g3

I was strongly affected by this position, something many readers may find difficult to understand, since it is a seemingly normal endgame with winning chances for White. But I foresaw that it would eventually lead to the same theoretical endgame as the one I had had against Velimirovic in Rio de Janeiro 1979, in a version that would be winning for White. And 12 moves later this very endgame had duly arisen.

40.c5+ ♔c6 41.c4 a3 42.♔d1 ♔c7 43.♖g6 ♔b7 44.♔e2 ♔c7 45.♖d6 ♔b7 46.♖b6+ ♔c7 47.♖g6 ♔b7 48.c6+ ♔c7 49.c5 ♗f2 50.♔xd2 ♗xc5 51.♖xg3 ♔xc6



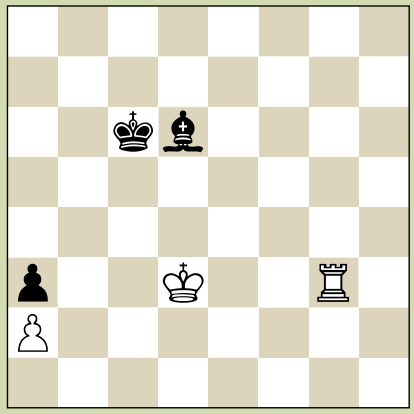
Now we have the endgame that the great endgame explorer Chéron had analysed in 1948 and that had occurred in chess practice only once: in my game against Velimirovic in Rio. A game that I won by improving on Chéron's findings (which was essential, as I was not only looking for a win in the game, but also had to make sure my opponent couldn't claim a draw based on the 50-moves rule) in an epic battle that was adjourned twice and which kept me and my second Ulf Andersson busy for more than two weeks. So, after 35 years it was indeed time for a new practical example. As I have explained in my book *Studies and Games*, this position is winning for White because of the passivity of the black bishop. The only way drawish positions can arise, depending on the positions of the two kings, is by the bishop reaching the crucial b2-square.

52.♔d3

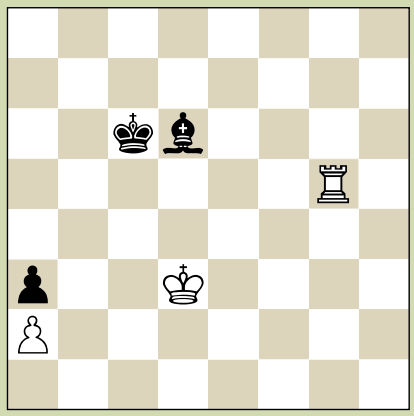
Not the best move. According to the tablebases, the text-move will lead to mate in 58 moves, and with 52.♔c3 White could have saved himself four moves. This is because the plan is to transfer the king to b3. By threatening the black a-pawn with the king, White will be able to use his rook to force further retreats from his opponent.

52...♗d6

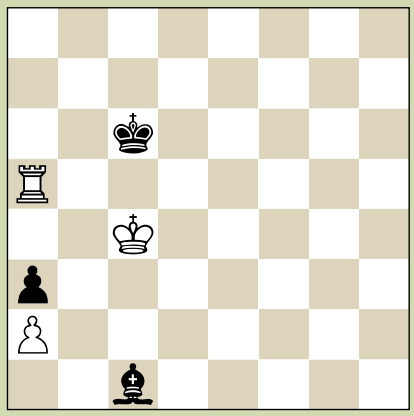
A crucial moment. Where is the rook to go?



53.♖g5? Allowing the win to slip away. White should have kept his rook on the third rank. With 53.♖e3 White can prevent the black bishop from reaching square b2.
53.♖f3 and 53.♖h3 are OK as well, since in that case 53...♗e5 will be met by 54.♔c4 (or 54.♔c2) 54...♗b2 55.♖d3!, and the black king will be locked up on the queenside.

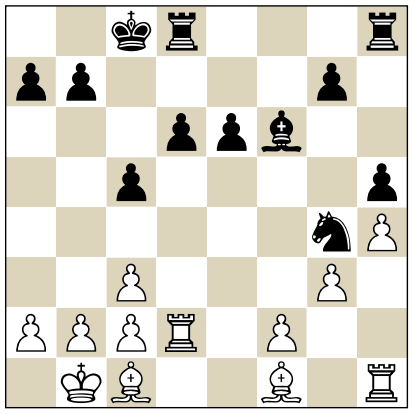


53...♗f4! Rodshtein knows his stuff. The text-move is the only way to draw. **54.♖a5 ♗c1 55.♔c4**

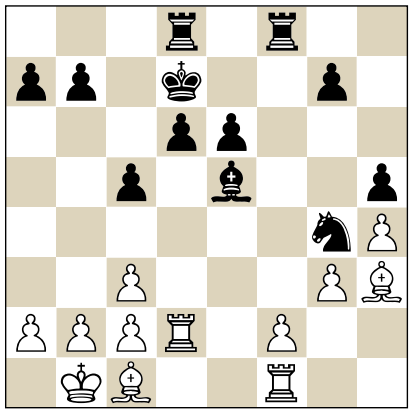


55...♔d6 Accurate again. 55...♔d7 was also enough. Black had to prevent his king being cut off with 56. ♖d5+. Dominguez kept trying until the 103rd move, but his attempts were of no theoretical significance.

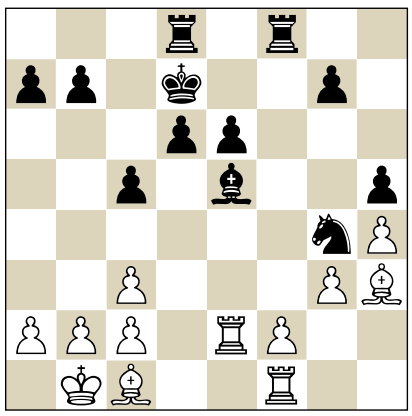
Shakh is fixing the pawn structure, hoping for some counterplay.
20.g3



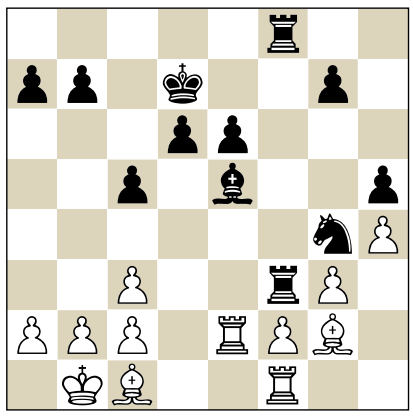
20...♖hf8 Aiming at f2. 20...g5!? looks like a decent try to exchange the kingside pawns, but surely White must have a way to keep the pressure.
21.♗h3 ♗e5 22.♖f1 So far Sergey has been masterfully unfolding his pieces, although there were alternatives. **22...♔d7**



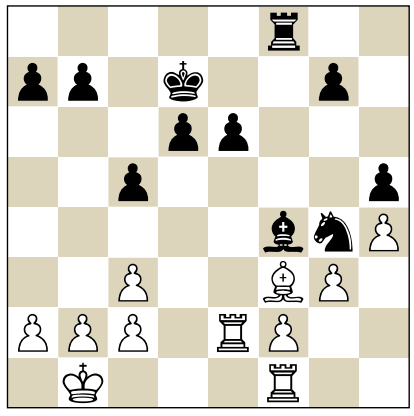
23.♖e2
23.f3 looks very tempting, but the following long sequence may lead nowhere: 23...♘h6! 24.f4 ♗f6 25.♖fd1 ♘f5! 26.♗xf5 exf5 27.♖xd6+ ♔c7, and it doesn't look like much. I don't see how White can make use of his extra pawn in the bishop endgame.



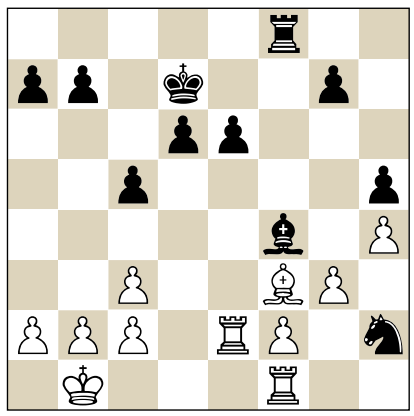
23...♖f3! A brilliant positional idea. Black must at all cost prevent the collapse of his position, which would follow after the eventual f3-f4.
24.♗g2 ♖df8!
Of course, this was the point.



25.♗f4? A blunder. Sergey thought this was a better way of winning the exchange, but he forgot how tricky Shakh is. 25.♗xf3 was the more primitive way of grabbing the exchange and the better one: 25...♖xf3 26.♗e3! (hoping for the neat trick 26...♗xg3 27.♗xc5! dxc5 28.♖d1+ ♗d6 29.♖ed2) 26...♔c6!? when Black has an excellent light-square blockade, but it's only White who is fighting for the advantage. With all due respect to the imagination of Shakhriyar and the defensive methods of Petrosian – it is, after all, a full exchange!
25...♗xf4! 26.♗xf3



26...♘h2!! Oops. Now I saw Sergey cursing himself. This is indeed painful – all of a sudden, White is worse!



The pride with which Shakhriyar Mamedyarov shows his medal earns the approval of his teammates Wang Hao, Mickey Adams, Veselin Topalov, Anish Giri, Anton Korobov, Vladimir Tukmakov (captain) and Teimour Radjabov.

McFarland

"[The] classic McFarland book: a deeply researched, lovingly produced and definitive enquiry into an area of chess with a view to being the last word on the subject"—*British Chess Magazine*

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José Raúl Capablanca. ***A Chess Biography.*** Miguel A. Sánchez. 2014 [**not yet published, expected spring 2015**], $55 library binding (18.4 × 26 cm), ca. 60 photographs, appendices, notes, bibliography, index, 978-0-7864-7004-4. This definitive biography uses many never before published sources and many rarely seen ones to present an exhaustive documentation of the champion's life and chess. Currently in editing.

Emil Kemeny. ***A Life in Chess.*** John S. Hilbert. 2013, $49.95 softcover (17.8 × 25.4 cm), 361 diagrams, appendix, crosstables, bibliography, indexes, 978-0-7864-7359-5. The Hungarian appeared in New York's Lower East Side in 1890 and within a decade was one of America's finest players and writers.

Aron Nimzowitsch. ***On the Road to Chess Mastery, 1886–1924.*** Per Skjoldager *and* Jørn Erik Nielsen. 2012, $49.95 library binding (18.4 × 26 cm), 88 photographs, 10 maps, appendices, notes, bibliography, indexes, 978-0-7864-6539-2. Deeply, thoroughly researched. Book of the Year—*ChessCafe.com.*

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Blindfold Chess. ***History, Psychology, Techniques, Champions, World Records, and Important Games.*** Eliot Hearst *and* John Knott. Softcover 2013 [hardcover 2009], $40 (17.8 × 25.4 cm), 62 photographs, diagrams, appendices, bibliography, indexes, 978-0-7864-7526-1. Book of the Year— U.S. Chess Federation. Finalist, Book of the Year — English Chess Federation.

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Stephen Shoemaker, after Jacob van der Heyden's 1616 engraving in Selenus (Monté)

Capablanca. ***A Compendium of Games, Notes, Articles, Correspondence, Illustrations and Other Rare Archival Materials on the Cuban Chess Genius José Raúl Capablanca, 1888–1942.*** Edward Winter. Softcover 2011 [hardcover 1989], $35 (15.2 × 22.8 cm), 26 glossy plates, diagrams, appendices, notes, bibliography, indexes, 978-0-7864-6634-4. "Fascinating"—*British Chess Magazine.*

Alexander Alekhine's Chess Games, 1902–1946. ***2543 Games of the Former World Champion, Many Annotated by Alekhine, with 1868 Diagrams, Fully Indexed.*** Leonard M. Skinner *and* Robert G.P. Verhoeven. 1998, $125 library binding (21.9 × 28.5 cm), 1,868 diagrams, references, bibliography, indexes, 978-0-7864-0117-8. Book of the Year— U.S. Chess Federation. Finalist, Book of the Year — British Chess Federation.

Chess Facts and Fables. EdwardWinter. 2006, $45 softcover (17.8 × 25.4 cm), 219 photographs, 210 diagrams, references, indexes, 978-0-7864-2310-1. "A wealth of interesting positions, game scores, photographs, stories and observations that will fascinate any lover of the royal game"—IM John Donaldson (*JeremySilman.com);* "fascinating...great read"—*Chess Life.*

The Classical Era of Modern Chess

Peter J. Monté

616 pages $65 library binding (18.4 × 26 cm)
155 illustrations, glossary, appendices, bibliography, index
ISBN 978-0-7864-6688-7 2014

A hundred and one years after H.J.R. Murray's *A History of Chess* comes McFarland's premier offering of chess history, a magisterial work of decades of labor (and two-and-a-half years in editing at McFarland). Introduced by Arabs to their new territories in the Mediterranean during the 8th and 9th centuries, the game soon spread throughout Europe, slowly evolving from the less dynamic *shatranj* version into modern chess. This study examines the classical era of what became modern chess from the late 15th century into the 1640s. After tracing the birth of modern chess in Europe, it offers a critical appreciation of *all* chess literature — including works by von der Lasa, van der Linde, Murray, Chicco, Eales, Petzold, Sanvito, Garzón and many others. The book also chronicles *all* the openings and *all* game moves and *all* the problems of the era and the development of the laws and rules like the "en passant" capture (much debate!) and castling (numerous versions coalesced into one).

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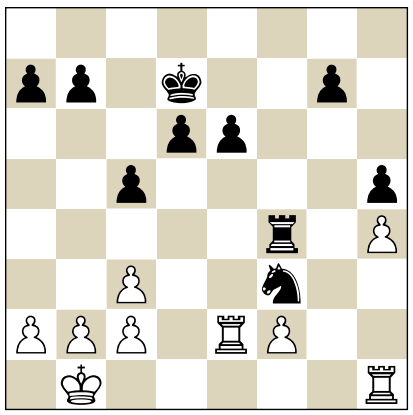
27.♖h1

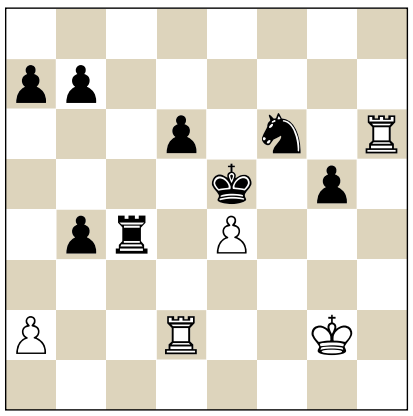
27.♗xh5! was possibly the lesser evil, although Black emerges a pawn up here: 27...♘xf1 28.gxf4 ♖xf4 29.♖e1 ♖xh4 30.♗e2 ♘d2+ 31.♔c1 ♘e4 32.♖g1, with excellent drawing chances.

27...♘xf3 28.gxf4 ♖xf4

The rest is a matter of technique and Mamedyarov has no problems with that.



29.♔c1 e5 30.♖e3 ♘xh4 31.♖eh3 g5 32.♖g3 ♖f5 33.c4 ♔e6 34.♔d1 ♔f6 35.♔e2 ♖f4 36.♖d3 ♔e6 37.b3 ♖f6 38.♖g3 ♔f5 39.♔e3 ♖h6 40.f3 ♔f6 41.♔e4 ♘f5 42.♖gh3 h4 43.c3 ♘g7 44.b4 ♔e6 45.♖g1 ♖h5 46.♖h2 ♘e8 47.♔e3 ♘f6 48.♖d2 h3 49.♔f2 e4 50.♖e1 h2 51.♖h1 ♖h3 52.fxe4 ♖xc3 53.♔g2 cxb4 54.♖xh2 ♖xc4 55.♖h6 ♔e5



White resigned.

Rather an early resignation, not at all in the style of the tough fighting Sergey. He clearly felt demolished. The position, though, is obviously lost.

■ ■ ■

Going into the final round, we had essentially already won the cup. Our last match, against Saint Petersburg, wasn't a complete formality, of course, but little could go wrong anymore. Nevertheless, it was a pleasant feeling to have won with a perfect score of 7/7. Once again it was Veselin who did the job. In fact, he got quite lucky in the end in his game against Peter Svidler, but on the other hand we had been pressing throughout the match. Before the round I had pointed out to Peter Svidler that I am a lot more from St. Petersburg than my opponent Dominguez (it's my birthplace, in fact), after which our Board 1 in that match, Veselin, started shooting questions at my opponent such as 'Can you buy Coca-Cola in Cuba?'. But all the trash-talking was in vain in the end, as I spoilt a gigantic advantage against Leinier. Nevertheless, 3½-2½ was enough to win the match, and so our proud team of SOCAR had made it!

> 'We spent the last evening in a classy British Club. Much to the pleasure of our British team member Mickey Adams and much to the disappointment of Wang Hao: "British food is bad for Chinese."'

The closing was quite laconic and strange at times. For example, there were no board prizes for Boards 7 and 8. In fact there were no real board prizes, full stop, as the players only got medals and no goodie bags or technological gifts as written in the regulations. In short, the stuff Magnus Carlsen calls 'monkey business'. For those who don't know what that means: it's a by now trendy term used by Magnus after the drawing of lots at the Olympiad. When the World Champion picked the black pieces for the first round, he decided to open the other box as well, just to be sure he hadn't been cheated.

At the end, the host of the closing ceremony apologized for all the mistakes of the organizers. Hopefully that won't become a tradition. On the bright side, while the website was often unavailable or not entirely trustworthy, the organizers made excellent video clips of interviews with the participants which were published on their YouTube channel – which fortunately was working.

Some of the more professional members of our team had already started thinking about where to celebrate before the last round. This paid off and we spent the last evening in a classy British club. Much to the pleasure of our British team member Mickey Adams and much to the disappointment of Wang Hao: 'British food is bad for Chinese.' However, to entertain Hao, I kept the conversation about Japanese culture (his favourite subject!) going, so in the end there was no team member who was not happy.

Hao is especially fascinated by the Japanese having set phrases after countless activities (leaving the building, entering the building, starting a meal, finishing a meal, etc.). I managed to recall many of them (my having lived in Japan for three years does pay off sometimes), but there was one I didn't manage to recall, which they say to a team of people that has done some good work. Hao didn't remember it either. Now I have finally thought of it. *Otsukaresama deshita.* ■

Braveheart

On the 18th of September, Scotland voted in a referendum, by 55.3% to 44.7%, to remain part of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland – to wailing and lamentations in the streets of Glasgow and great rejoicing almost everywhere else. In former times, Alec Salmond, the leader of the Scottish National Party and the embodiment of the secessionist movement, would have been taken to London to be hanged, drawn and quartered for treason. That he converses amicably with Her Majesty the Queen (herself half-Scottish) and may eventually be rewarded with a peerage at Westminster, rather than swinging from a gibbet, can be viewed either as a paragon of democratic tolerance, or the epitome of decadence – depending on one's political proclivities.

The Scottish Chess Association (SCA, which became 'Chess Scotland' in 2001) is one of the oldest regional bodies in the world, being founded as early as 1884. It predates the British Chess Federation (established in 1904), although that body's antecedent, the British Chess Association (BCA), goes back much earlier. Organised activity in Scotland, however, began in the first half of the 19th century with the establishment of the Edinburgh Chess Club in 1822 – soon to be followed by others in the important cities of Glasgow, Dundee and Aberdeen.

The most distinguished Scottish player of the Victorian era was undoubtedly George Henry Mackenzie, who dominated U.S. chess from the time of his emigration there at the age of 26 in 1863. His fifteen tournament victories, including the 2nd, 3rd and 5th American Chess Congresses, stand testament to the extent of his superiority in his adopted country. His one major international triumph, in Frankfurt 1887, was against an illustrious field that included Blackburne, Zukertort, Tarrasch, Paulsen and other luminaries. Also hailing from north of the border, in Montrose, was the enigmatic and indubitably talented Cecil de Vere – winner of the 1st BCA Challenge Cup in 1866. He resided in London during most of his brief life, however, and the Scots don't seem so keen to claim him as their own – hence his sobriquet (thanks to a flattering comparison by Wilhelm Steinitz with a genius from New Orleans) 'The English Morphy'.

Herein lies a problem of definition: who exactly counts as a Scot? Is it a question of ancestry, birth, residence – or is identity conferred by some occult practice, like wearing a kilt or blowing the bagpipes? *Scotland's Chess Centenary Book* by C.W. Pritchett and M.D. Thornton – a slender, but nevertheless useful guide – provides a partial answer: 'The finest player, the most masterful organiser, the most powerful driving force Scottish chess has ever seen (was) W.A. Fairhurst' – in other words, an Englishman, from Cheshire. His extraordinary record of winning eleven championships in eleven attempts (!) is not likely to be broken. To this structural engineer's list of accomplishments one can add victory in the 1937 British Championship and the first ever Commonwealth Championship in Oxford 1950. Fairhurst was by no means the first Sassenach (literally 'Saxon') to make his mark in the land of lochs: D.Y. Mills won the Scottish Championship no less than eight times between 1885 and 1900.

Before Fairhurst's golden era, however, came an intriguing political courtship when the newly formed BCF attempted to seduce the SCA. The demure, wee lassie appeared hesitant at first but in 1908 dispensed with coyness and joined the BCF in holy matrimony. One obvious benefit of this nuptial union was that the British Championships of 1911, 1920 and 1926 were held in Scotland. Alas, simmering resentment lay beneath the surface, which culminated in acrimonious divorce in 1930. Perhaps a diligent historian will one day uncover the whole story, but I suspect the full catalogue of tartan grievances is now lost in the mists of time. The ostensible reason for the split, however, was that the blundering BCF, haughtily disdainful of regional sensibilities, failed to guarantee a place in the British Championship for the Scottish Champion.

Scotland duly applied to join FIDE that same year and was rightly rejected unanimously – with Germany, Belgium, Great Britain and the Netherlands abstaining. The admission criteria at the time were unambiguous:
'La Fédération Internationale des Echecs est une association de fédérations nationales d'échecs.'
'Toute fédération nationale pourra s'y joindre.'

Given that there is no such thing as Scottish citizenship, Scotland was, presumably, correctly deemed not to be a nation. Undeterred by this stark rebuttal, the SCA made a fresh application two years later. Perhaps daunted by the prospect of an endless, obdurate stream of admission requests or – more likely – merely wishing to expand his power base, President Alexander Rueb, in a deft manoeuvre worthy of Campomanes, appointed

a small commission to examine the matter, with himself as head, rather than placing the matter directly before the Delegates, as would have been the normal procedure. This cosy little threesome reported favourably on the application, which was then rubber-stamped (with Great Britain abstaining).[1]

This capitulation on a vital point of principle had important repercussions for both FIDE and chess in the British Isles. If Scotland could be admitted as a FIDE member, then why not the principality of Wales? Slipping deeper into the mire of absurdity, FIDE also welcomed the glorified chess clubs of the Crown possessions of the Bailiwicks of Guernsey and Jersey into its bosom. Even FIDE occasionally comes to its senses though and, forty-four years after the appalling laxity of the landmark decision on Scotland, the door was slammed shut on further illegitimate applications – thus essentially returning to the status quo ante.

Did the schism benefit chess in the UK, or at least in Scotland? This imponderable can never be proved either way, of course, but I can think of several reasons why the net result has been damaging. Some years ago a concerted campaign was begun to get chess recognised as a sport by parliament, which potentially might have opened the door to substantial lottery funds. Tony Banks, the minister responsible at the time, who strongly supported the measure, wearily admitted to me that the existence of several different bodies, each jealously guarding its own fiefdom, made his task somewhat harder (although he added that chess is by no means unique in this respect). I will not go so far as to claim this large, self-imposed obstacle was the sole or even primary cause of the collapse of the campaign, but if we cannot organise ourselves, why should others help us? A lack of co-ordination was also responsible for the dearth of English players at the Commonwealth Championship in Glasgow this year. And the Scots have been miffed for a while that financial conditions are not available to their players at the British Championship. These antagonisms and petty jealousies serve no one's interest.

Above all these specific (and ultimately solvable) issues, though, is the simple fact that rigorous competition fosters higher standards, and lack of it results in mediocrity. One need only consider football, where the two fierce rivals, Celtic and Rangers, have amassed a ridiculous 99 season victories between them. They should have been playing in a British Premier League, battling with Chelsea, Arsenal and Manchester United, rather than swatting flies for the past century. Scotland has enjoyed 83 years of representation in Olympiads, thus theoretically affording its members ample opportunities, but with the bar set so low for qualification, the players have had no great incentive to improve. How many of them would have been worthy of a place on a British team? I don't know the answer, but not many: in my 30 years of Olympiad experience only Jonathan Rowson springs to mind. Some might argue that this supports the notion of separatism but this is rather like saying that women should only play in women's tournaments.

'Celtic and Rangers should have been playing in a British Premier League, battling with Chelsea, Arsenal and Manchester United.'

Talking of Doctor Rowson, my fellow three-time British Champion suffered an acute case of separatist twitterrhoea in the run-up to the referendum. Unfortunately for him, having followed Samuel Johnson's dictum 'The noblest prospect a Scotchman ever sees, is the high road that leads to England!' he was unenfranchised. Indeed, residency was probably the only way of fairly establishing voting entitlement: Jonathan has English blood, just as I have Scottish (Welsh and Irish) blood. That is another reason why I am not persuaded by spurious arguments of a unique identity. Far more connects us than divides us. This 'mongrel nation' – to use Alec Salmond's expression, has always benefitted from a steady influx of foreigners. GMs Ketevan Arakhamia-Grant and Jacob Aagaard, and IMs David Levy and Andrew Greet, are just a few of those to have fortified Scottish ranks over the years. Even some who were born in the country – like Scotland's first grandmaster, Paul Motwani, and the current European Under-14 Champion, Kai Pannwitz – need not go back very far to trace their paternal origins elsewhere (to India and Germany respectively).

There is absolutely nothing wrong with local pride. Indeed, it is healthy. But the overwhelming majority of the 64 million citizens of the United Kingdom think we are better together. And they are right. ■

[1] Source: Edward Winter's *Chess: The History of FIDE*, Section 5, Scotland's admission to FIDE. On his website chesshistory.com

A Kick from Pegasus

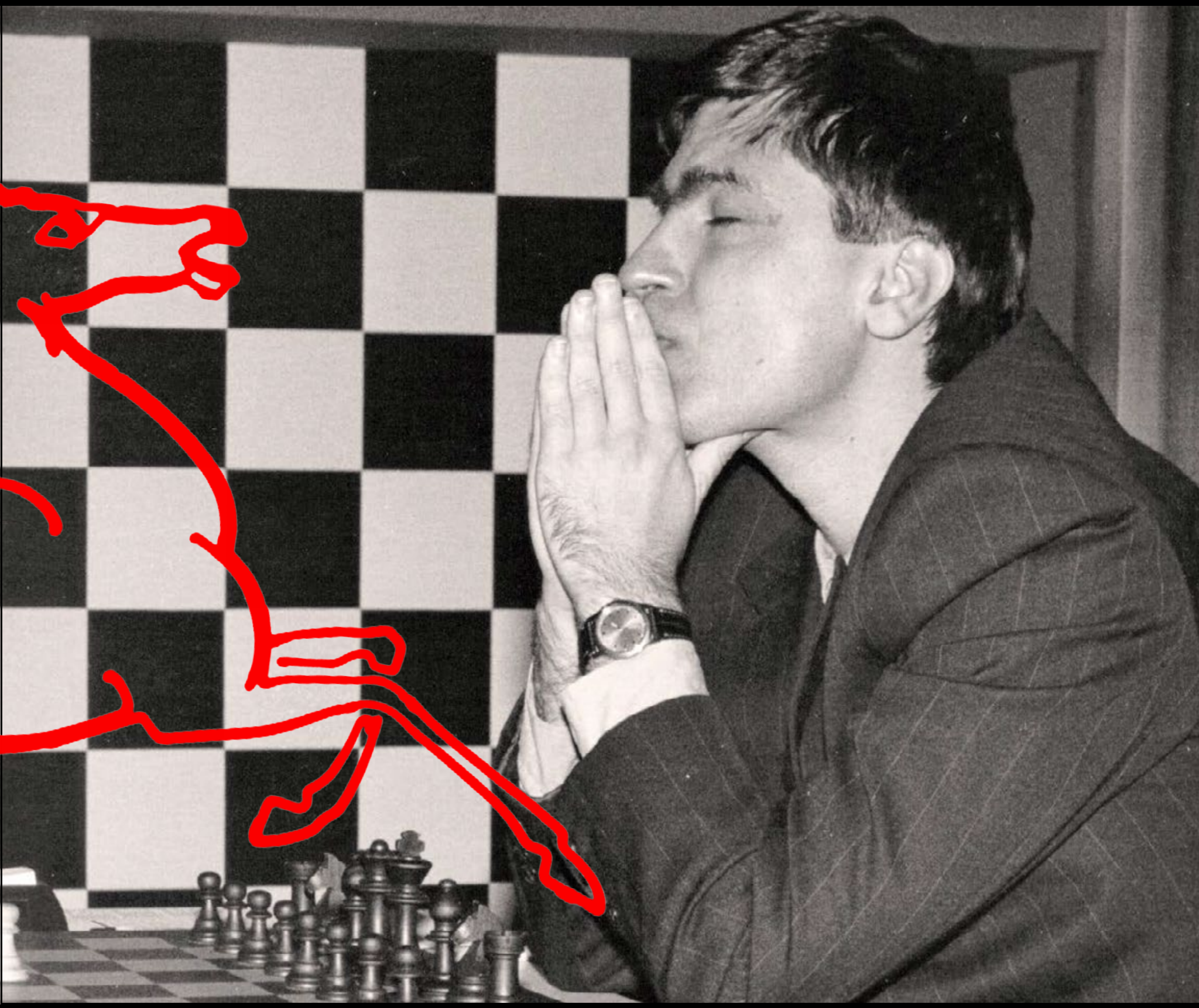
What does it take to get ready to play?

A game of chess doesn't start with the first move. Every player has his own beliefs and rituals to arrive at the board in the right mood or disposition. **Genna Sosonko** explores the methods and superstitions that chess players cling to in their wish to be 'ready to play'. He comes to the conclusion that there is only one golden rule that applies to us all.

When Constantin Brancusi was asked about the secrets of his artistry, the famous sculptor replied: 'Making things is easy, what's hard is getting yourself in the mood to make them.' Getting yourself in the mood to play chess well is no less of an art. There is not one uniform piece of advice – everything depends on the individual.

'As for the question of how I prepare for a chess tournament, I'll say that the most important things for me are getting plenty of sleep, quiet and an absence of worries', Jose Raul Capablanca wrote. 'I've heard that Alekhine pays a lot of attention to complicated and difficult psychological preparation. For me that would mean an enormous waste of physical and mental energy.'

There are chess players who find it hard to get into a competitive routine. They usually start a tournament badly, they have to warm up. For them it's useful to play a couple of training games before the tournament to at least approach a situation that's



Ukraine's Vassily Ivanchuk is not the only grandmaster for whom getting into the right state of mind before a game is of vital importance.

similar to a fighting one – 'sit next to the clock', as one grandmaster put it, although, of course, any training game is basically artificial.

Bobby Fischer had trouble getting in the mood to play, even if he was always mentally in the world of the wooden pieces, probably more so than any of his colleagues. We can recall the innumerable problems that arose for the organizers of tournaments in which the American was playing, and the quintessence of these problems was his match against Boris Spassky in Reykjavik in 1972. The extremely uncompromising Fischer was afraid of the start of the event, but after sitting down at the board he forgot his doubts and was completely in the contest, the struggle.

This phenomenon isn't new, as we know from the classics. The great orator Cicero wrote that what he feared most in the world was the silence that reigned in the Senate when everyone was waiting for the first sound of his voice. When he was preparing for his famous speeches, Cicero recited Homer and Euripides.

The methods for creating a mood for creativity can be extremely bizarre. Schiller could only write when he had rotten apples on his desk. Their smell aroused the inspiration in him. Before starting work, Wagner laid out bright pieces of silk on his chairs, and in the process of composing his musical works he had the habit of picking them up and pulling at them. Dumas Père only wrote on special square sheets of paper. If he couldn't find any

of this paper or had run out of it, he stopped working.

Chopin liked to be by himself before a concert and play something from 'The Well-Tempered Clavier': Bach was always his source of inspiration. The Dutch footballer Clarence Seedorf says that before important matches he watched his best goals on YouTube again. Haydn only composed music on special enamel paper, always wearing a diamond ring on his finger and constantly staring at it.

If you don't have a diamond ring, don't despair – there is a multitude of other ways to get yourself in a creative mood before a tournament game, and you should choose the one that best suits your character and temperament. While for some, jokes and conversations, even meaningless ones, alleviate the tension without influencing the forthcoming competitive process, others have to completely cut off all contacts in the hours before the game, and go into their own world. There are no universal recipes here: for some people a long walk or even a run or visit to a gym are useful on a playing day, but for others this is an unjustifiable waste of the energy that's needed for the struggle at the board. Some people look at stamps before the start of a game, and others read an escapist romance or crime novel, as Paul Keres did, for example.

After he won the 2004 World Championship in Tripoli, Rustam Kasimdzhanov admitted that he hadn't brought any books to the tournament that time: 'None. Probably to subconsciously save energy. I've had times when an interesting book distracted me from my game. Once I was reading *Joseph and His Brothers* by Thomas Mann during a tournament, and I really didn't want to tear myself away from the book and go to my game. Then I decided that light reading during a tournament was acceptable, but it's better to leave serious reading for your leisure time.' Vassily Ivanchuk also said the same thing recently: 'There are a few fantastic books that should never be read during tournaments under any circumstances.'

There are people who like to sleep before a game. Viktor Kortchnoi is a big fan of sleeping before a game. In the late '60s and early '70s, when I was assisting him, one of my duties was to make the phone call that signalled the end of the maestro's afternoon nap. Some people prefer just to lie in bed with their eyes closed. Botvinnik also lay down before games, 'but I didn't sleep, I just lay down, because when you're lying down no one comes and starts stupid conversations with you.'

Although many players like to sleep or at least lie down for a while before a game, Kasparov, as I recall, had a slightly different routine. After his preparation on the day of a round he went somewhere to sleep, then got up, ate, and immediately went to the round. Chess players don't often do this, although even Tolstoy said that sleep after lunch is silver, but before lunch it's gold. Petrosian liked to listen to Tchaikovsky before his World Championship games, preferring his Concerto No. 1, while Kasparov listened to the songs of Vysotsky.

> 'Clarence Seedorf says that before important matches he watched his best goals on YouTube.'

Igor Platonov from Kiev, who played successfully in Soviet championships, could be seen before a game with a book on tactics. To get himself in fighting form, Platonov solved problems and found combinations. I know that he wasn't the only person to resort to this method, but it always seemed to me that it was a sign of a lack of confidence in oneself.

Eduard Gufeld, despite his apparent belligerence and quick temper, was by nature in fact more of a cautious person, and sometimes even timid. Those who knew Eduard Efimovich well recall how he boosted himself before a game: 'I'll wipe the floor with him, I won't leave a wet spot. Who is he anyway, this chump, they're two a penny! Who does he think he is, I'll trash him so good, he'll be looking for his own foot in the bin for two days!' And so on, and so forth. In other words, this was also preparation for the game, a desire to defeat his own fears and doubts.

To switch into the world of chess Botvinnik arrived a quarter of an hour before the start of the game and sat down at the board, getting himself in the mood for a five-hour stay in a world that is measured by a different time and where different rules apply. But Jan Timman, for example, easily switches from a mood of light conversation and exchanges of jokes to a tournament game. I usually sat down at the board a few minutes before the start of play and started playing through the variations that I was most likely to encounter in that day's game.

Once with that same Timman I was so distracted that Jan asked me after the game, 'What were you thinking about for nearly 10 minutes before your first move?' The question was reasonable – I almost always started games with the queen's pawn, and also made it that time, but, immersed in my reflections, I just didn't notice that the clocks had already started.

I know that quite recently, when it was still permitted to be late for a game, Dmitry Jakovenko, who is in the top 20, always arrived between 5 and 10 minutes after the clocks had started. When I asked my colleagues whether

this was a deliberate strategy to knock his opponent off balance, to demonstrate his superpowers or to avoid annoying photographs, they explained to me that the reason for his lateness was more prosaic. The grandmaster checks and re-checks variations that he might encounter in that day's game up to the very last moment, and simply can't tear himself away from the embrace of his 'silicon friend'.

The more static the sport, the more developed are its methods of analysing situations that arise in the playing process. Chess, where you can analyse if not all of it, then almost all of it, is the most vivid example. Obviously it's essential to prepare for a game on the day of play, but here you have to know your limits. You can't go into the playing hall bubbling and overflowing with variations that you've just been feverishly trying to memorize.

During the Candidates' tournament in Montpellier in 1985, when I was walking to my next round, I decided to drop in on one of the other players. We got on well, and after knocking on the door of his hotel room I cautiously looked inside without waiting for a reply. What I saw made me take a step back and blurt out something like 'pardon'. 'Come in, come in,' he said, 'I'm already almost finished.'

No, no, it's not what you were thinking or may have imagined: I was invited in by the head of the grandmaster, on which he was standing, supporting his body with his hands. When I went into the room the head invited me to sit down and explained that he always did this before a game. Because it's been well known for a long time that this procedure helps the circulation and improves the thinking process. After talking for a couple more minutes we set off for the tournament hall, and I forgot to find out if standing on your head before a game really is useful for a player.

I repeat – there's no universal advice here and there can't be any. The author of these lines witnessed how, when they were already late for a tournament game in Moscow in 1971, Leonid Stein and Anatoly Karpov continued playing cards enthusiastically. I remember that I thought even then: what would Botvinnik say to that with his half-hour walk before the game, preferably along a previously-chosen quiet route?

Obviously for Karpov and Stein the process of playing cards right before a tournament game didn't play any role. They both easily switched from one playing procedure to another. I don't remember how Karpov and Stein did when they almost missed the round, but they were the ones who shared victory in that strong international grandmaster tournament.

And how did people prepare for games long ago? The Nottingham tournament of 1936 is considered one of the strongest of the last century. But in addition to top grandmasters and the World Champion, several British masters also played in it. Theodore Tylor arrived slightly late for his third-round game. Before he sat down at the board he asked, 'How is Alekhine doing?' Tylor was told that he would be playing Alekhine himself that day. The game ended in a draw. In his notes to that game Alekhine, who made a serious blunder, wrote, 'The fact that the master was in time trouble can no more be considered a justification than a law-breaker's reference to the fact that he was drunk at the time of the crime.'

When you go to a game you have to forget about yesterday's defeat and – even more so – not think about tomorrow's opponent. All your thoughts should be about the current game, in which you have to find the best move every time without worrying about yesterday's missed opportunities. Here and now!

At the 1987 SWIFT tournament in Brussels I witnessed a conversation between a young Garry Kasparov and his coach Alexander Nikitin: 'What shall I play tomorrow? Come out with the Benoni in the King's Indian? Maybe', Kasparov wondered before his game against Larsen. 'But if I play the Tarrasch, how to win with the isolated pawn? White always has a draw...'

Nikitin persuaded Garry to play the Tarrasch anyway – as Larsen never played for a draw. Kasparov won and did it quite easily. 'We have to look at the variation that we were analysing in the training sessions again, there are a lot of unclear places in it', Kasparov told Nikitin when the three of us were going back to the hotel together. 'This is the second time you've beaten Larsen in the Tarrasch,' I interjected, 'although it's true that he played a different variation last time.' Kasparov looked at me in surprise: 'Who cares about Larsen? What does Larsen have to do with it? We're past that! Tomorrow I'm playing Ljubojevic.'

The Italian conductor Claudio Abbado said, 'My favourite music is what I'm conducting at the time.' The most important game for you should be the one you're about to play in a few hours. It and only it should get all your attention. Kortchnoi believes that Petrosian was able to listen to himself before a game like no one else: will I be able to play today? What's my mood? And if it wasn't his day, Petrosian wrapped up the battle in the opening, regardless of what colour he was playing.

Vassily Vasilievich Smyslov once told me about a similar feeling. After winning a game against Spassky and listening to his opponent's complaints about a superior position that had been ruined by a stupid mistake, Smyslov told him, 'You didn't have any chances in that game, Boris Vasilievich.' I think that every professional knows that feeling – your mood is elevated, your mind is working brilliantly, today is your day!

Like an actor during a performance, a chess player has to constantly look

at himself from a distance during a game – you can only control the game if you can control yourself. Fear of public performances is a well-known phenomenon in the worlds of theatre and music. Adolf Genzelt, a famous pianist in the 19th century, stood in the wings until the last moment when he was playing with an orchestra, and only when it was the turn of the piano did he suddenly jump out and dash to his instrument.

Obviously that's only one of countless examples from the worlds of theatre and music, where a nervous condition before a performance leads to a psychological freeze and usually also to catastrophe. Robinson Crusoe understood that 'the fear of danger is always stronger than a danger that has already occurred' when he saw the print of a human foot on the sand of his island, which he had thought was uninhabited.

In itself stress is useful if it doesn't destroy clarity in your mind, otherwise it can become harmful. There are two types of stress; one is creative, stimulating and helpful, but its opposite is panic and anxiety, restricting and sometimes even crippling. It isn't only actors and musicians who are familiar with both types of stress to some degree or other, but also representatives of all sports without exception. But while this panic and anxiety usually arises in performers because of their fear of forgetting something, losing track, singing off key or playing a wrong note, a chess player can get into that condition for different reasons. For fear of messing something up in a prepared variation, or worse, forgetting it, getting into time trouble, coming under attack, blundering. In the wider sense – not achieving a norm, not getting to the next stage of the competition, missing out on a prize, or losing rating points.

It's good if you're fearless by nature, like Tal, for example, but the sense of fear to some degree or other is familiar to the overwhelming majority of us. Worrying unjustifiably and being fully aware of it, I wrote a slogan to myself and even hung it in a visible place in my study – 'Don't panic!' Unfortunately, overcoming my character turned out to be harder than including the Caro-Kann in my opening repertoire, and I only partly succeeded in ridding myself of unjustified worries during a game.

This is a very serious issue, as a chess player has to have nerves of steel and a calm head, and you should learn how to rid yourself of excessive worry from your very first steps in chess. If you can't overcome your anxiety before a game and are easily thrown into a condition of panic during play, you should think about taking up something else.

> 'In itself stress is useful if it doesn't destroy clarity in your mind, otherwise it can become harmful.'

Patriz Ilg, the German 3000-metre steeplechase world champion, wrote: 'If my wife got a cold, she could easily keep working. But my inflammatory processes started suddenly and continued intensively: my tonsils swelled up, I came out in blotches, my wisdom teeth ached. Viruses and bacteria particularly raged before important competitions. I only had to think about being ill two weeks before the start of a championship, and something started immediately.'

The condition described by the German athlete is well known in medicine. Pre-performance anxiety causes the activation of stress hormones, and that leads to an additional burden on the immune system. Just as the muscles and sinews of some athletes wear out, in others the body's defensive resources become exhausted as a result of intensive burdens and extreme stress.

Everything that was said above is well known to professional chess players too. Many people can talk about their increased tendency to catch colds and also more serious ailments during tournaments.

We should also talk about rituals before a game and talismans. When Tony Miles arrived for a game and sat down at the board he always took off his watch and put it on his scoresheet. After that he turned his knights to face sideways, putting them into the diagram position, and poured himself his first glass of milk. The English grandmaster started all his games like that. When Miles was at his peak many players tried to imitate him. Once I played a Scottish master who also took off his watch before the game and also, like Tony, drank glasses of milk during play. The quality of the Scotsman's moves was far from that of Miles, alas: he finished near the bottom of the tournament table.

Garry Kasparov also took off his watch before a game, although the champion's watch just stayed on the table throughout the whole game. The first thing Kasparov did after the chess clock stopped – or, more disturbing to his opponent, when he felt the game was decided – was to put it back on his wrist, returning to the world of astronomical time.

Many people choose the same route to get to a game, while others always drink a little cup of strong coffee before a game, and others, mainly women, put a soft toy or some other talisman on the table next to them. For Anna Zatonskih it's a cat brooch. 'My husband gave it to me. I hope a little of his grandmasterly wisdom will come to me from it in my game.'

At Wijk aan Zee the players in the grandmaster tournaments leave their coats in a cloakroom at the entrance to the tournament hall. When Kas-

parov played here, walking down the long corridor he always turned off and hung up his coat on a hook (the second on the right) in another room – the one for the tournament administrators. He did it once and then it became a ritual that Garry observed until his very last appearance at Wijk aan Zee.

If any rituals or talismans help you get in a better mood for the game, you shouldn't stop doing them. Just don't be completely dependent on them, let alone allow them to become an obsession. Victoria Cmilyte said recently, 'Virtually all chess players have a favourite pen, but, like all pens, it sometimes breaks. It's best just not to make a habit of this.' You can borrow any ritual from the arsenal of the greats, or you can invent something of your own, but you mustn't forget that in the end the quality of your moves will decide everything.

And like everything in the world, it's best to think of rituals and talismans with a little smile. At one of the World Cups a meticulous female journalist who didn't know much about chess asked Peter Leko, 'What's your ritual before a game?' 'My main ritual,' Peter replied, 'is repeating all the moves of my home analysis without any mistakes.'

And what should you do in your free time? How should you spend your rest days? During serious tournaments Viktor Kortchnoi ruled out any excursions or 'cultural programmes'. In answer to the question of what was the most useful thing to do during a tournament, Kortchnoi replied, 'Do nothing. Stay home. Save energy. Think about your games... Perhaps you can walk a little.'

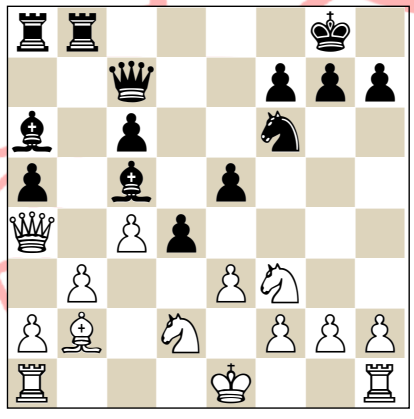
When Mariss Jansons, the chief conductor of the Amsterdam Concertgebouw Orchestra, was asked before an evening concert in Lucerne if he was going on the excursion to Wagner's house, the maestro replied in the negative. 'Not at all because I've been to that house before,' Jansons explained, 'it's just that this type of excursion uses up energy. I don't know how much exactly, but I'm sure it uses energy. The discipline, the mood that I've created for an evening concert is one of the components of my schedule for the day. I took it from Mravinsky. On the day of a concert the great conductor didn't even have rehearsals. He shut himself into his flat and didn't turn on the television. He sat at home, not exchanging a word with anybody.'

During Wimbledon 2013 before each match Novak Djokovic could be seen... in a Buddhist temple in the very centre of Wimbledon. Novak meditated for a quarter of an hour, then walked in the beautiful garden of the temple. Around the garden you could see statues of Buddha and his sayings. It was noticed that Djokovic often stopped in front of one of them: 'Even if you win a thousand times in single combat, the true warrior is the one who achieves victory over himself.'

The temple was located 200 metres from Centre Court and, of course, the famous player's walks didn't go unnoticed by journalists. Djokovic admitted that he visited the temple to relax, to get away from the mass of people, photographers and reporters. He said, 'During these two weeks of a hectic Grand Slam obviously there is a huge amount of pressure and stress and everything involved. So you need to have a place where you know you can switch off and recharge your batteries. But I can say that it's a very calm and very beautiful environment where I like to spend time.'

But here too universal advice would be incorrect. When he was leading 5-2 in his match for the World Championship in 1978 against Viktor Kortchnoi, Anatoly Karpov lost three games and allowed his formidable opponent to level the score. He had a reason to become depressed. His seemingly crazy trip on his rest day from Baguio to Manila (six hours one way) for a basketball match gave him the necessary recharge and enhanced mood. Karpov won the decisive game.

Another World Champion, after travelling to Leningrad on the rest day during the first Moscow International Tournament in 1925 – a night journey there and back – and giving a very difficult simul there, reached the following position the next day:



Capablanca-Verlinsky
position after 13...♖fb8

Indeed, not the position you expect from a World Champion with White after 13 moves.

A recent example. At the Vugar Gashimov Memorial in Shamkir, Magnus Carlsen lost two games in a row at the end of the first leg. The World Champion complained of tiredness and loss of interest in his play, his energy dissipating somehow. On the rest day Magnus played football, relaxed, recharged, and, in his own words, 'alleviated all my accumulated stress'. In the second leg Carlsen played superbly, scoring +3 and convincingly winning the tournament.

I called this article 'A Kick from Pegasus'. After a kick from the hoof of the winged horse Pegasus a fountain was formed on Mount Helicon – Hippocrene. According to legend the water from this fountain served as a source of inspiration. What is it – inspiration? A lightning bolt from above? Intuition? A particular condition of the soul? Or just the ability to get yourself in a working mood with the help of various peripheral means?

There isn't just one recipe for getting yourself in that mood before a chess game, and the advice of the wise man: Gnothi seauton – Know thyself – has never been more appropriate. ■

Anand tests his form in Bilbao Masters

In his last serious test before the World Championship match, Vishy Anand looked eager and ambitious. Despite a last-round loss, the Indian claimed the Bilbao Masters ahead of Levon Aronian thanks to the Bilbao scoring system.

On an elevated stage, a small island in a sea of participants in the European Club Cup, the four players in the Bilbao Masters were a special attraction. Whereas the ECC paid a unique visit to the Basque city, the Bilbao Masters is a tradition that the local organizers cherish, even though it has lost some of its glamour. Originally called the Grand Slam Final, the tournament was designed to bring together the winners of the strongest events in the world, such as Wijk aan Zee and, in past years, Sofia and Nanjing. A great idea, which unfortunately never came to full fruition. This time the field consisted of the winner of Wijk aan Zee, Levon Aronian, the winner of the Candidates' tournament in Khanty-Mansiysk, Vishy Anand, and two other strong grandmasters, Ruslan Ponomariov, who happens to live in Bilbao, and Spanish champion Paco Vallejo.

> 'I am looking forward to the match and my two results this year are enough to put me in a good mood.'

Vishy Anand had not given the status of the tournament much thought and mainly saw it as a strong round-robin. That he managed to win the Bilbao Masters, or Grand Slam Final if you want, for the first time, he saw as a nice bonus. For the former World Champion, Bilbao was his first classical tournament since the Candidates' in Siberia, and upon his arrival he was a bit nervous, not knowing how rusty he would be. A fine win against Ponomariov on the first day took away his worries, and when he also defeated Vallejo in the second round, it was clear that Anand was thoroughly enjoy-

ing himself and felt comfortable playing.

Anand seemed to be sailing for a smooth victory until he ended up in an unpleasant endgame against Aronian on the final day and suffered a defeat that visibly spoiled his mood. It took him some time to overcome his anger before he admitted that it still had been a good result.

Anand won the Bilbao Masters thanks to the Bilbao scoring system that allots three points for a win and one point for a draw. It's a system that rarely produces an outcome different from the traditional scoring system, but here it did. Although he remained unbeaten, scored as many 'traditional' points as Anand and defeated him in one of their encounters, Levon Aronian had to settle for second place. At the prize-giving Anand joked to Aronian that this was the first time he had benefited from the system. 'The one case where it really worked against me was in London 2010, where I would have been the joint winner along with McShane, but in fact the three-point rule worked against us there (and Magnus Carlsen won – DJtG).' To which Aronian added with justified irony that he was still waiting for the first occasion that the system was going to favour him.

As might have been expected, many journalists wanted to hear Anand's views on the forthcoming match against Carlsen, but here the Indian wasn't too forthcoming. Despite his defensive attitude he denied that he was reluctant to speak about the match. 'I am not sure exactly what you mean. I am just trying to get ready for the match, and that is that. Anyway, I'll have to speak about it in a month, so why start so early? I am certainly looking forward to it and like I said, the Candidates' result gives you confidence and you think about it positively again, and so on. But in the end I just have to go there and play a good match, that's all. I guess I am looking forward to it and my two results this year are enough to put me in a good mood.'

And in case you wonder whether he was ready to reveal the names of any of his seconds or his plans to prepare for the match or anything else a bit more specific? No, he wasn't.

NOTES BY
Vishy Anand

QG 3.7 – D20
Vishy Anand
Paco Vallejo
Bilbao 2014 (4)

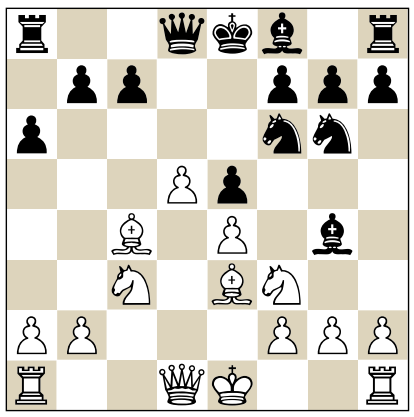
This game was played after the rest day, during which Paco had shown himself to be the best 'Basque Games' sportsman!

1.d4 d5 2.c4 dxc4

And this was a surprise; the Queen's Gambit Accepted hasn't figured much in Paco's games.

3.e4 ♘c6 4.♘f3 ♗g4 5.d5 ♘e5 6.♗f4 ♘g6 7.♗e3 e5 8.♗xc4 ♘f6 9.♘c3 a6

I remembered a game Karpov-Milov, Biel 1997, and tried to follow that.

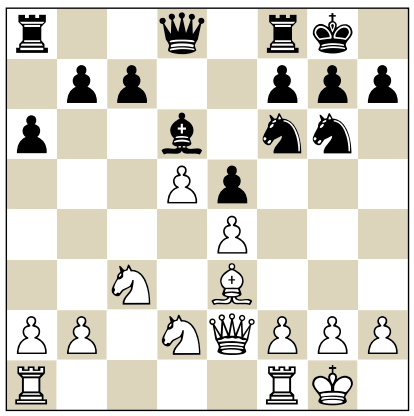


10.♗e2 Karpov castled first.

10...♗d6 11.♘d2 ♗xe2

I think Black is better off playing 11...♗d7, even though White has gained some time.

12.♕xe2 0-0 13.0-0



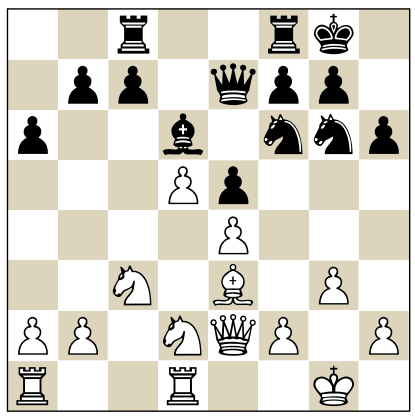
Here I was very happy with my position. The absence of the light-squared bishops means that Black's attack will struggle to have an impact, and White has pleasant prospects (for instance, ♘d2-c4-a5) on the queenside.

13...♕e7 14.♖fd1 ♖ac8

Aiming for ...c6, but, as the game shows, White is quite happy there.

15.g3 This could have been played earlier as well. Now the knight on g6 is misplaced.

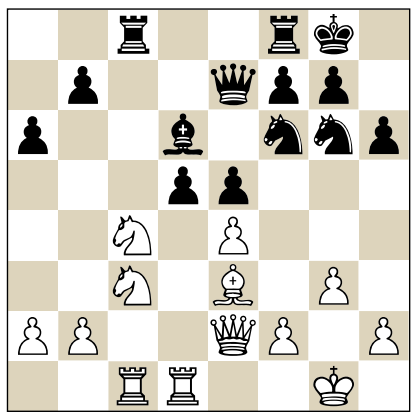
15...h6 I don't like this move, but it's unpleasant to have to reckon with ♗g5 on every move.



16.♖ac1

Also very nice was 16.a3!? ♗c5 (after 16...c6 17.♘c4 cxd5 18.♘xd5 ♘xd5 19.♖xd5 ♗c5 White can play 20.♖ad1 at once) 17.♖ac1.

16...c6 17.♘c4 cxd5



18.♘xd5 18.♘b6 more or less forces 18...♖xc3 (18...d4 fails to 19.♘xc8 ♖xc8 20.♘d5!) 19.bxc3 dxe4 20.c4, which was also tempting, but I went for the 'cleaner' option.

18...♘xd5 19.♖xd5 ♗c5 20.♖cd1 ♗xe3 21.♘xe3

The point of White's play. White dominates the d-file (and any rook exchange will give White a passed pawn). The knight on e3 is far supe-

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– Judit Polgar –

2014#7

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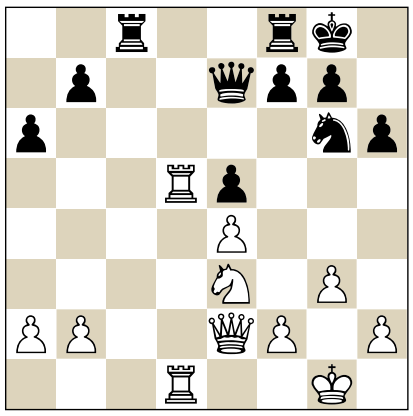
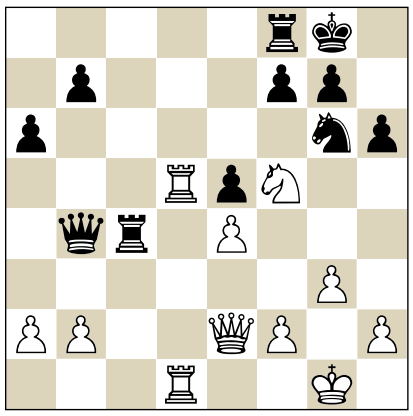
On the free day the players competed in a variety of Basque games. And no, this is not a melon!

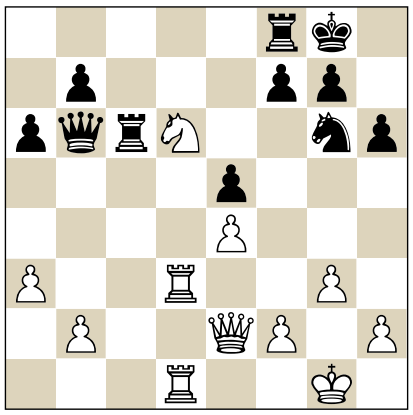
rior to the one on g6. Eventually, some combination of ♘f5, ♕g4, h4-h5 and the appropriate rook move should be decisive. Despite the equal material, White has a huge advantage.



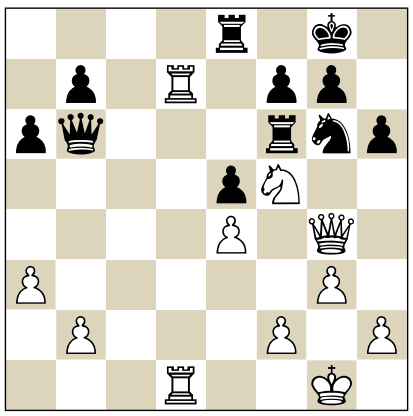
21...♕b4 22.♘f5 ♖c4
After 22...♕c4 23.♕g4 ♕xa2 24.h4 simply wins.



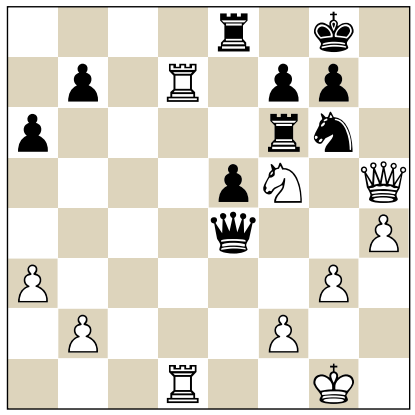
23.♘d6 Still, no harm done. White forces the rook back.
The comp recommendation is 23.a3 ♖xe4 24.♕f3 ♖e1+ 25.♔g2 ♕e4 26.♖xe1 ♕xe1 27.♖d1! ♕a5 (I had seen 27.♖d1, but without realizing that 27...e4 28.♕h5! traps the queen!: 28...♕a5 29.♘xh6+) 28.♕xb7.
23...♖c6 24.a3 ♕b3 25.♖5d3 ♕b6



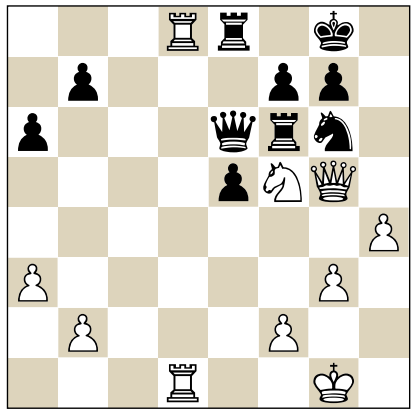
26.♘f5 Having ejected the queen, White goes back to the ♕g4 and h4 plan. **26...♖e8 27.♖d7** Stopping ...♘e7. **27...♖f6** No better is 27...♘f8 28.♘e7+ ♔h8 29.♘xc6 ♘xd7 30.♖xd7 ♕xc6 31.♖xf7.
28.♕g4



28...♕c6 28...♕xb2 loses to 29.h4 h5 30.♕xh5 ♕xa3 31.♕g4 ♕f8 32.h5 ♘e7 33.♖xe7 ♖xe7 34.♖d8.
29.h4 h5 30.♕xh5 ♕xe4



31.♖d8
White should avoid 31.♘d6? ♕c2! 32.♘xe8 ♖xf2, which even wins for Black.
31...♕c6 Or 31...♖fe6 32.♖xe8+ ♖xe8 33.♘d6, and now this wins the exchange, since the queen on h5 defends the rook on d1.
32.♕g5 ♕e6



33.♖1d6 And Paco resigned.
My best win of the event. ■

Bilbao 2014 — **cat. XXI**

					1	2	3	4		TPR
1	Vishy Anand	IGM	IND	2785	* *	½ 0	1 ½	1 1	10	2869
2	Levon Aronian	IGM	ARM	2804	½ 1	* *	1 ½	½ ½	10	2863
3	Ruslan Ponomariov	IGM	UKR	2717	0 ½	0 ½	* *	1 0	5	2642
4	Paco Vallejo	IGM	ESP	2712	0 0	½ ½	0 1	* *	5	2643

Repeat Performance?

A year ago, before the World Championship match in Chennai, **Sergey Shipov** took the risk of predicting a confident victory for Magnus Carlsen, and he guessed correctly. On the eve of the second Carlsen-Anand clash, the Russian star commentator very much hopes to see some intrigue!

In the year that has passed the two players' capabilities have not changed. But on the other hand the situation has become radically new. And the main thing is: the psychological background.

The reversal of roles changes considerably the attitude of the players to a match. The challenger always has an advantage in motivation over the champion. And now the challenger is Anand. It will be easier for him to play than it was a year ago. And this is why:

According to those close to him, immediately after the loss of his title in the match with Spassky, in Moscow in 1969, Tigran Petrosian experienced a great relief, and even joy! He was at last able to cast off the burden of responsibility, relieve the stress on his nervous system – and again become a normal person. A free artist.

It has always been the case (the feeling used to be stronger, but it still exists) that the World Chess Champion is not simply the winner of the championship, as in other types of sport. He is 'the chosen one', the envoy of the chess gods. An object of enormous attention throughout the world! Conforming to such a status is very difficult.

'Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown', and after losing his crown a year ago, Anand began simply playing chess. Quietly and for his own pleasure, without outside pressure. Without fear of losing. In this condition he again became capable of competing.

In addition, the criticism of the entire world, which assailed Vishy after the match in Chennai and the preceding not very successful years, must have stung and motivated him: 'Ah, everyone thinks that the lion is dead? Now I will show that he has merely laid down to rest!'

The Candidates' tournament shamed all the sceptics, myself included. It showed that Anand was still a force. In Khanty-Mansiysk (truly a paradise for the Indian!) his little oversights and constant time-troubles disappeared somewhere. He again began acting practically and very cleanly as regards minor tactics. Together with excellent opening preparation (the work before and during the World Championship matches was not wasted) the former great player emerged.

For Anand the match in Sochi will be a war without risk. Whatever the outcome, he will definitely not lose anything (since all the summits were already conquered earlier), and he may acquire a great deal. No one will criticise Vishy in the event of failure. After

NEW IN CHESS

A typical scene from last year's match in Chennai. While Magnus Carlsen confidently answers a question, Vishy Anand seems lost in thought, silently hoping for the end of the press conference.

all, his time has supposedly passed...

Whereas of Carlsen, who is in the very prime of life, only victories and confident, champion-like play are expected. Tell me, for the strongest player in the world is it a great feat to defeat for the second time a broken and ageing opponent? Does Magnus have a serious inner stimulus for the full concentrating of all his strength and resources? Does he feel that Anand is a serious threat?

I am not sure about this. And these psychological factors may play a cruel trick on the champion.

After he won the title, Carlsen, who earlier also did not lack for attention by the fans, was engulfed by a massive avalanche of fame. A fanfare of incredible strength resounded. This was and remains a test. Yes, Magnus has a defence against the outside world. Yes, he is able, when necessary, to engross himself in chess and become abstracted from extraneous factors. And yet his capabilities are not unlimited. His armour is solid, but it has its limits. The world puts pressure on the champion and, objectively speaking, hinders him from concentrating on chess.

Expressed in Kasparov's language (who knows something about the problems of being champion!), Carlsen is now in danger of becoming 'bronzed' – in sensing that he is a monument. A monument to himself.

Magnus obtained a new coating of 'bronze' when in the summer he also became World Champion at rapid-play and blitz chess. What can he now aim for, how does he tune himself up for a battle against opponents he has already defeated? How to overcome staleness and fatigue?

For the sake of objectivity I will say that our champion very much loves chess and loves the very process of the game – almost like Ivanchuk. So that the absence of future goals should not be fatal for him.

There are also attendant, non-competitive factors, which may hinder the champion.

Anand feels very much at home in Russia. He often and successfully plays in our country, and he has many friends here. Whereas Carlsen, by my observation, relates both to Russia (as it happens) and to the FIDE leadership (Magnus supported Kasparov at the elections in Tromsø) without any particular warmth.

And therefore I will venture to assume that Anand will be psychologically more comfortable than Carlsen in Sochi. Again this is a trifle. Again nothing fundamental. After all, last year Magnus was able to play well on his opponent's home ground. Even so, this factor should not be underestimated.

What is shown by a study of the two players' games from the past year?

Carlsen has begun taking more risks. He is now absolutely confident in his powers and considers himself obliged to beat everyone and with either colour. I am very pleased about this enlivenment of the young champion's style, since a year ago there was a tendency for him to play very drily. Too often and too readily he exchanged the queens. In the new year the champion's play became more interesting to watch.

But the question arises about the acceptable degree of risk.

In his striving for victory, Carlsen now often goes too far, which leads to failures. Magnus's rather reckless actions and an underestimation of his opponents' possibilities have become a regular feature. I was especially staggered by his losses at the Olympiad – against Naiditsch and Saric. They were not at all of the standard of a champion. These are warning signals.

Of course, Carlsen will endeavour to play more accurately against Anand. But will not the habits he has acquired also display themselves in this match? Say, due to fatigue or emotional excitement? Anything is possible...

In the opening Carlsen is still very unpredictable. However, this is already a general tendency. If you don't vary your choice of opening, you don't make it to the top.

Anand, I repeat, has pleasantly surprised us with his newly-acquired ease of play. And this, of course, is a psychological effect. In all other chess aspects I have not found any particular changes in Vishy compared with last year. However, at his age stability is better than innovation. You can't teach an old player new tricks.

Historical analogies

There are numerous examples of players fighting for the title twice in succession. And often this was a return match involving a former World Champion – against a younger opponent.

I think there is no point in remembering Lasker's second match with

Steinitz in Moscow in 1896-97. By then the first World Champion was a pale shadow of his former self and was unable to put up any real resistance against the new leader. Anand is not yet so bad. On the contrary – he is even experiencing his umpteenth youth.

It is appropriate to remember the Euwe-Alekhine return match in the Netherlands in 1937. Alekhine, who was desperate to regain his title, was precisely 45 at that moment, just as Anand is now (more precisely, Vishy will celebrate his birthday on 11 December, immediately after the match). But for the Russian champion the task was simpler. In my view, he was clearly superior in class to Max Euwe. For success it was sufficient for Alexander Alekhine to put himself in order, do some work and prepare for the match. At the chess level Anand is not superior, so that standard efforts will not guarantee him victory. And does he have Alekhine's craving to regain the title? I am not sure that he does. Desire, yes. But craving, strong passion – hardly. He has not the same temperament.

I think that many will compare the clash in Sochi with the Tal-Botvinnik return match in Moscow in 1961 – but wrongly so, in my view. Yes, the outward signs (including the relative ages of the players) are very similar, but there is a radical difference. Without belittling the virtues of Botvinnik, who prepared splendidly for his battle with the young champion, I must mention that Tal was unwell when he started the match (already then his kidney illness revealed itself), which became the main cause of his failure. Carlsen, fortunately, does not have any health problems. So there will be no analogies.

On the other hand, a comparison with the second Karpov-Kortchnoi match in Merano in 1981 suggests itself. There again an ageing challenger played against a young champion. But no great battle developed (in contrast to their first meeting in 1978) – Karpov proved much stronger. The three years that had passed after Baguio made him stronger and more stable, whereas Kortchnoi, by contrast, had lost some of his energy.

In principle, in Sochi the same may happen. But I must mention that one year is not the same as three. During such a short period in the ageing process of the players, one which is favourable for Carlsen, serious fluctuations are possible.

Opening strategy

The main problem for 1.e4 players still remains the solidity of the Berlin Wall. To overcome it, the patience and control of Caruana are needed. Anand does not now have these qualities. He needs a more lively and fierce battle.

The probability of the Anand camp finding any genuinely fruitful ideas in the Berlin Variation is something that I do not rate very highly. Five per cent, not more. And here it is not a matter of a lack of respect for the ex-champion's seconds. Simply it's that sort of variation...

There is even less probability of the Norwegian going along with his opponent and playing something aggressive with Black against 1.e4 – for example, the Najdorf Variation of the Sicilian Defence. Such a present would be most welcome for the Indian!

The conclusion is simple: Vishy should not repeat the mistakes of the first match, but should switch to the Closed Games. In reducing order of probability there may follow: 1.d4!, 1.♘f3!? and 1.c4. And only if he is leading may the ex-champion return to the Open Games.

For example, I expect new discussions in the Nimzo-Indian Defence. I am sure that many readers will still remember the ninth game in Chennai. In Sochi Anand must play like this in the first game – without waiting for a defeat.

I do not think that Carlsen will regularly venture into duels in topical and sharp variations. During the past year he has not eliminated the fact that he lags behind his opponent as regards computer analyses. Sharp duels – especially in lines which he has not previously played – are something that Magnus is capable of conducting. But this is unlikely to be his strategy.

I think that with White the champion will also seek happiness in the Closed Games. Possibly in the English Opening. However, he is capable of performing any opening experiment – everyone remembers the Ponziani Opening. I think that for the whole world it will be interesting to see the revival of old opening variations. And this is practical – for example, for one-off employment. The match is short, and every game can be decisive. As a rule, ageing opponents do not like surprises, and Anand is no exception. In short, I expect non-standard decisions from Magnus from the very first moves of the games!

> 'Expressed in Kasparov's language, Carlsen is now in danger of becoming "bronzed" – in sensing that he is a monument. A monument to himself.'

As regards playing style, Carlsen does not need to change or correct anything. He only needs to be himself. But not become conceited.

As for Anand, my last year's recommendations remain in force. I repeat: The ex-champion needs to overcome his desire to play with a reserve of solidity – and act aggressively. Serious tension in the position should be created from the very first moves.

Vishy should not get involved in lengthy, viscous positional battles. Desirably he should avoid passive,

inferior endings. This is Carlsen's territory. He is a marathon runner.

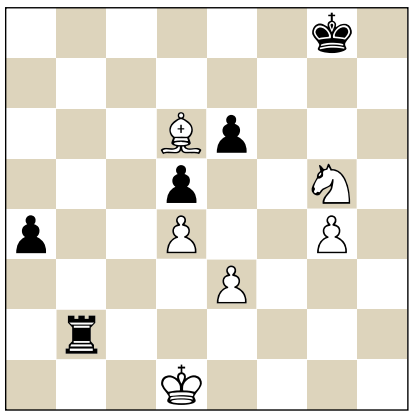
What has been said is not only a guide in the choice of opening variations (we all know that nowadays the opening often leads to an ending), but also a factor when making a difficult choice at key moments of a game.

Of course, this is not easy to put into practice, since it requires Anand to overcome his playing habits. In earlier years at difficult moments he usually agreed to play slightly inferior positions, skilfully earning a draw in defence. But times and opponents change. The present-day Anand should not play this way against the present-day Carlsen, as was shown by the previous match. At turning-points, when the character of the subsequent play depends on one move, it is desirable to choose lines with counterplay. Even if they are risky. Vishy is able to do this, it is simply that he rarely makes use of his gift.

Well, and the main thing, from which he must begin – Anand must believe in himself. Spread his wings!

Possibly he should follow Gligoric's principle: 'I play against the pieces!'. Forget about the name of his opponent.

And if Vishy's glance should treacherously dwell on the alpha male opposite him, he needs to remember a pleasant moment from this summer:



Carlsen-Anand
FIDE World Rapid, Dubai 2014
position after 33...♖b2

34.♘xe6? ♖b6 Here Magnus's head slumped, on noticing the key variation 35.♘c5 a3!, and wins. **35.♘f4 ♖xd6 36.♔c2 ♖b6! 37.♘xd5 ♖b7! 38.♘c3 a3 39.e4 ♔f7** And the a3-pawn proved stronger than White's three pawns.

For Anand this fragment is a psychological support for calm play in the match. It is a vivid demonstration of the fact that his opponent is also human. He can make mistakes. And he will definitely make mistakes, if he is set problems!

Mystical factors

In our world of individual superstitions and complexes it is customary to seek non-scientific signs predicting the outcome of coming events. And the less the sense in these signs, the more people believe in them!

I recall how in the 1990s I had an 'action' sweater which brought me luck – and I invariably put it on before a round. But on one occasion I got so carried away by my preparations for a game that I forgot the most important thing... I arrived for the round, looked at a mirror in the cloakroom – and was stupefied! I was wearing my house jumper, by no means an 'action' one. And I was facing a dangerous opponent with Black. Ah, how upset I was! And I realized that I could rely only on myself, since now no one and nothing would defend me... In fact, I won that game quickly and confidently. After which my 'action' sweater was dispatched to the rubbish bin.

> 'As a rule, ageing opponents do not like surprises, and Anand is no exception. I expect non-standard decisions from Magnus from the very first moves of the games!'

Before the match in Sochi, fans are looking for signs in the players' performances.

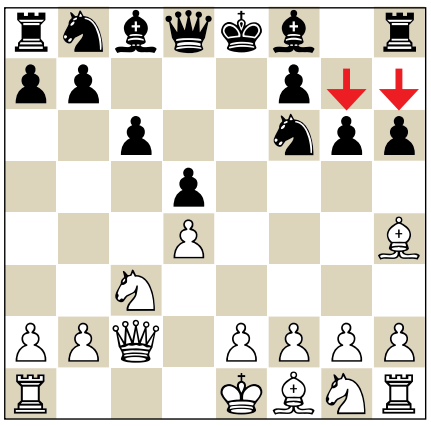
For example, some think that Anand made a big mistake by playing successfully in his last tournament before the match – in Bilbao. There he demonstrated a high quality of play and took first place. It was immediately remembered that before his greatest match success in Dresden 2008 (where he more than confidently defeated Kramnik) Anand performed very feebly, also in Bilbao. He scored -2 without a single win. He concealed himself, husbanded his strength, and dulled the vigilance of his future match opponent.

I think that now it is a case where Anand does not need to rely on shamanism and superstitions. After several years of playing depression, anything positive is important for him. Any victory (even one not gained at the proper time ☺) will add to Vishy's self-confidence – which is extremely important before the match in Sochi.

Besides, this sign can be disputed by a counter-example. Before his clash with Topalov in 2010, Vishy performed well in Wijk aan Zee, scoring +2 without any losses, and beating none other than Kramnik and Shirov. And this meant nothing! After it he played a good match.

Let us hope that this also occurs on this occasion.

P.S. I hope that I have given the readers the firm impression that an interesting and tenacious match awaits us. And now my forecast – Magnus will win again, and quite confidently. Because he is stronger. And because this is needed. For example, in order that we should see an even more interesting match between Carlsen and Caruana... ■



Bring out the Bishop anyway

Jeroen Bosch

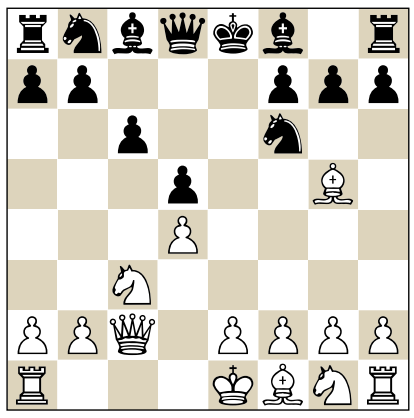
6...h6
&
7...g6!?

Queen's Gambit
Exchange Variation

The Queen's Gambit is one of Black's most reliable openings – indeed it has often been said that one cannot become World Champion without mastering its secrets. The Exchange Variation can be annoying to meet, though, that's to say when White uses an accurate move order not allowing an early ...♗f5. Help is at hand, however!

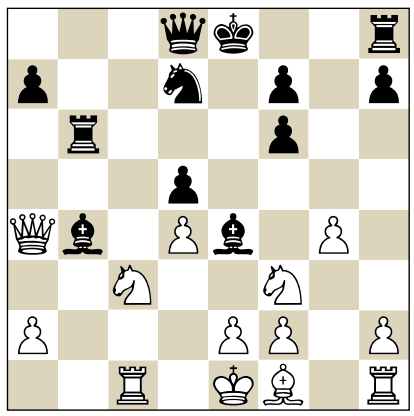
Our present SOS intends to upset the traditional theoretical verdict. It allows you to play ...♗f5 against White's most accurate move order in the Exchange Variation (the one designed to prevent the freeing bishop move). Interested? You should be! – this is a rarely played line which has produced good results. One thing that speaks in its favour is that the odd-looking combination of ...h6 and ...g6 has received no attention in the literature whatsoever.

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.♗g5 c6 6.♕c2



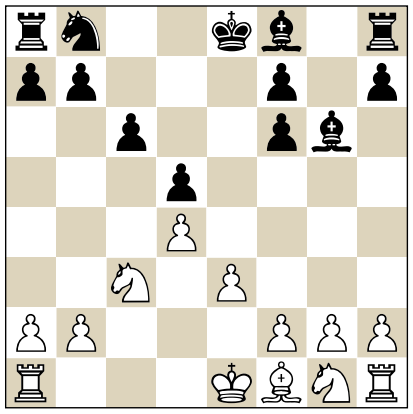
This is the accurate move order to prevent ...♗f5. For many Black players this is the most annoying move to face. White intends to play e3, ♗d3, ♘ge2, and 0-0, a system that promises White a slight but pleasant edge. This SOS is directed to prevent this by means of a subtle move order.

After 6.♘f3 White has lost the option of playing ♘ge2, and it also allows 6...♗f5 (or 6...♗e7 7.♕c2, and now Black has time for 7...g6 8.e3 ♗f5): 7.♕b3 ♘bd7!? (7...♕b6) 8.♕xb7 ♖b8 9.♕xc6 ♖xb2 10.g4 ♖b6 11.♗xf6 gxf6 12.♕a4 ♗b4 13.♖c1 ♗e4



14.a3 ♗xc3+ 15.♖xc3 ♖b1+ 16.♔d2 0-0, and Black was already winning in the blitz game Karpov-Kasparov, Valencia 2009.

The most popular move is 6.e3, but then White has to be ready to play the endgame after 6...♗f5 7.♕f3 (the only way to gain anything) 7...♗g6 8.♗xf6 ♕xf6 9.♕xf6 gxf6,



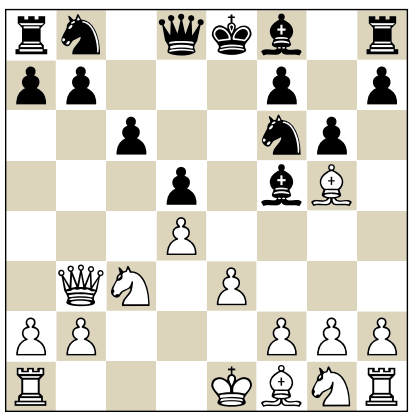
and Nigel Short has often shown that this endgame – despite the fractured kingside – is quite playable for Black. These days, GMs like Andreikin, Grachev and Baramidze regularly play this line, with good results.

6...h6!?

This move has a very bad reputation for two reasons: first of all, it drives the bishop to a better square, and secondly, it weakens square g6 – the characteristic manoeuvre ♘b8-d7-f8-g6 is no longer on, for example. I would like to recommend this move only in combination with a very concrete idea on the next move.

Instead of traditional replies like 6...♗e7 and 6...♘bd7 some players like to move their knight to the edge with 6...♘a6 (to insist on the ...♗f5 idea), but there are problems after the accurate 7.e3 ♘b4 8.♕b1 g6 9.♕d1!, when 9...♗f5 10.♖c1 is an edge for White after 10...a5 11.a3 ♘a6 12.♕b3!.

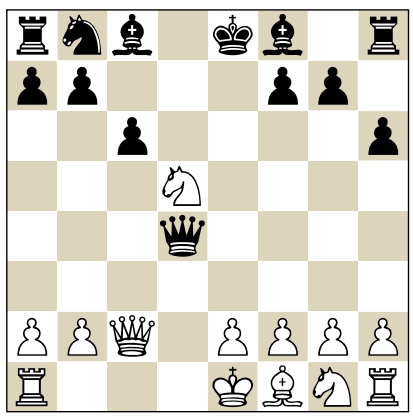
It is important in this connection to note that 6...g6 is met strongly by 7.e3 ♗f5 8.♕b3!,



and Black cannot play the normal antidote ....♕b6, as 6...g6 has left the f6-knight unprotected. Compare this to our SOS idea. Black is now forced to play the weakening 8...b6, after which he is worse.

7.♗h4

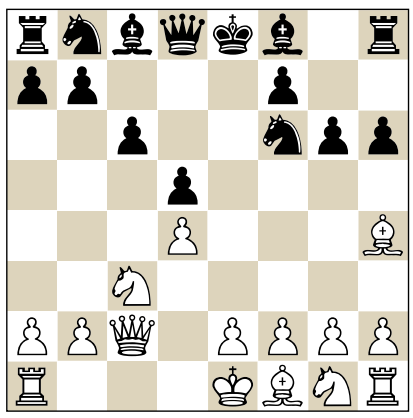
White could be tempted by the pin along the c-file, but after 7.♗xf6 ♕xf6 8.♘xd5 (nothing is gained by 8.e3 ♗f5 9.♕d2 ♗d6 10.♘ge2 0-0 11.♘g3 ♗g6 12.♗e2, and in Ballai-Boguszlavszkij, Hungary 2009, the players agreed a draw, but Black's position is already preferable) Black has 8...♕xd4.



Black has already equalized! 9.♖d1 ♗b4+ 10.♘xb4 ♕xb4+ 11.♖d2 ♗e6, and Black had a very easy game in Szeberenyi-Boguszlavszkij, Hungary 2005.

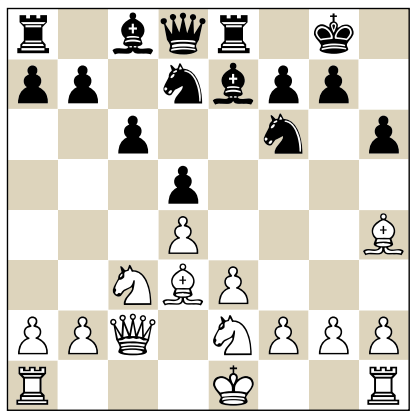
7.♗f4 ♗d6 (7...♘h5!?) 8.♗xd6 ♕xd6 9.e3 0-0 should be OK for Black. After 10.♗d3 ♖e8 11.♘ge2 ♘bd7 12.h3 a6 13.0-0, as in Ballai-Boguszlavszkij, Hungary 2010, Black should have continued with 13...c5.

7...g6!?



This is the point of the previous move. Black is going to play ...♗f5 after all, and the subtle inclusion of 6...h6 7.♗h4 ensures that this is tactically possible. See the comment on move 9.

The reason that 6...h6 has such a bad reputation is the following traditional sequence of moves: 7...♗e7 8.e3 0-0 9.♗d3 ♖e8 10.♘ge2 ♘bd7

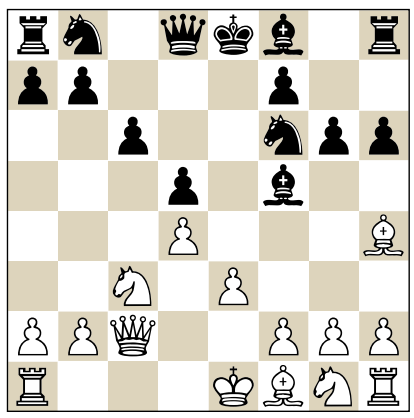


and here Black would be much better off without the inclusion of 6...h6 7.♗h4 – in this line White voluntarily plays ♗g5-h4-f2. Even without the interpolation White is better in this version of the Exchange Variation, as Kasparov has repeatedly shown. Here Black is clearly worse, both after castling kingside and after the immediate 11.f3.

8.e3 Nothing is gained by 8.♗xf6 ♕xf6 9.♘xd5, which is still met by 9...♕xd4 10.♖d1 ♗b4+.

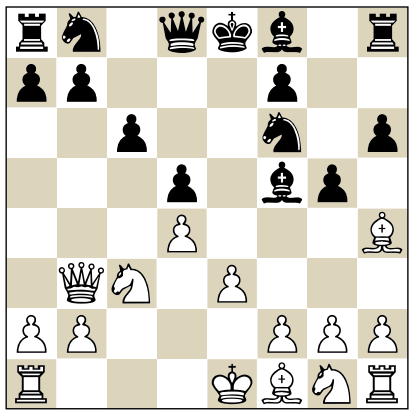
Not 8.e4?! dxe4 9.♘xe4?! (9.0-0-0 ♗e7 10.♗xf6 ♗xf6 11.♘xe4 0-0, with a slight black edge) 9...♗b4+!, and Black is better.

8...♗f5



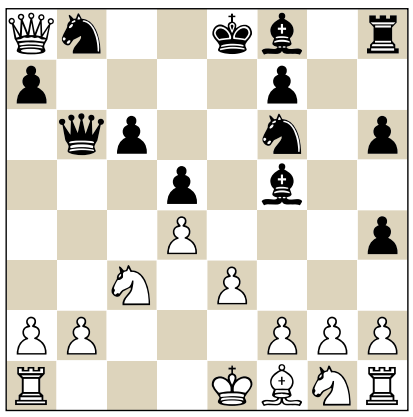
9.♗d3

9.♕b3 is the move that is supposed to dissuade Black from playing ...♗f5, but because of the inclusion of ...h6 ♗h4 Black now has 9...g5!. This is, in fact, the whole point of 6...h6 and 7...g6. Tactics support the positional idea of developing the bishop to f5.



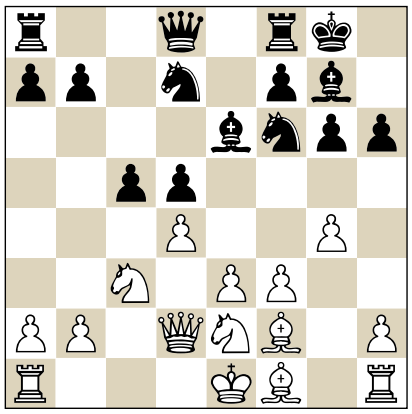
– 10.♗g3 ♕b6 is completely harmless. Indeed, after 11.♘f3 ♘bd7 12.♗e2 ♕xb3 13.axb3 ♘h5 Black was already playing for more, and managed to obtain an edge after 14.♗c7 ♘g7 15.0-0 a6 16.♘d2 ♘e6 17.♗g3 h5 18.f3 ♗g6 19.♖fe1 h4 20.♗f2 0-0-0, Szeberenyi-Boguszlavszkij, Balatonlelle 2004.

– 10.♕xb7 gxh4 11.♕xa8 ♕b6



and now White's queen is trapped, although he may be able to keep the balance with 12.♗b5 (not 12.♘ge2 ♗d6!, followed by castling) 12...cxb5 13.♘ge2!? (13.♘xd5 ♘xd5 14.♕xd5 ♗e6, with an unclear position that appears to be fine for Black), and this seems more attractive to play for Black, but it can't do you any harm to look at your next move: 13...♗e6 or 13...h3!?.

No advantage is promised by 9.♕d2 ♘bd7 10.f3 ♗g7 (10...♗d6) 11.♘ge2 0-0 12.g4!? ♗e6 13.♗f2 c5!



with equal chances in Aleksandrov-Diu, Vladivostok 2012. Aleksandrov was clearly attracted to Black's idea, as he later used it himself. See below.

9...♗xd3 10.♕xd3 ♘bd7

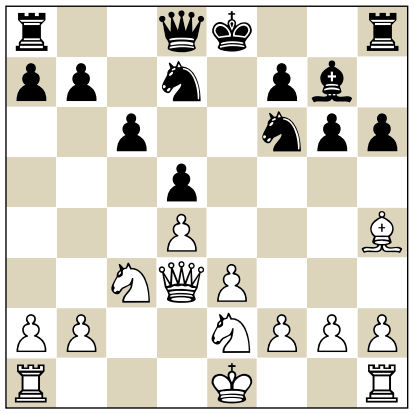
If Black manages to exchange the light-squared bishops in the Queen's Gambit Exchange Variation, he is usually doing fine. There are several examples of Black going on to win. If you are interested, take a look at, e.g., Bobotsov-Petrosian, Lugano 1968, and Nikolic-Kramnik, Amber blindfold 1998.

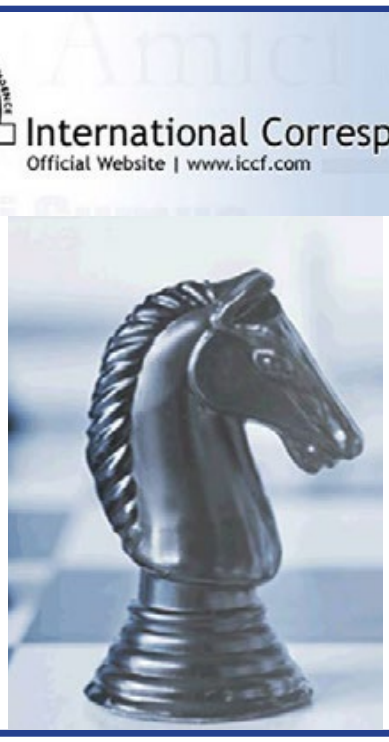
11.♘ge2 White insists on developing the knight to e2. 11.♘f3 gains nothing special after 11...♗e7 12.0-0 0-0 13.♖ab1 ♖e8 14.♗g3 ♗f8 15.♘d2 ♕e7 (15...♘h5 is also good, when it must be approximately equal, but I would prefer to be Black) 16.b4 a6 17.♖fe1 ♘e4 18.♘dxe4 dxe4 19.♕c4 ♘b6 20.♕b3 ♕e6 21.♕xe6 ♖xe6, with an equal endgame in Pap-Boguszlavszkij, Zalakaros 2003.

11...♗g7

This position has occurred in practice only twice (albeit in two high-level games). Black is absolutely fine, having managed to trade off his light-squared bishop (the eternal problem in most 1.d4 openings).

Let's take a look at both these games, with some brief notes.





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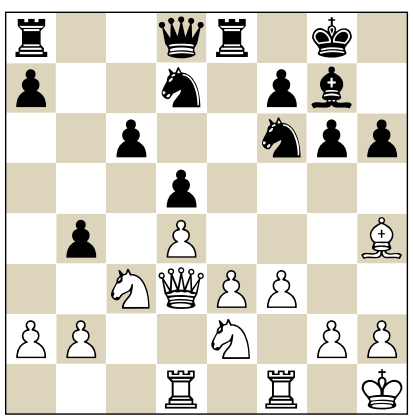
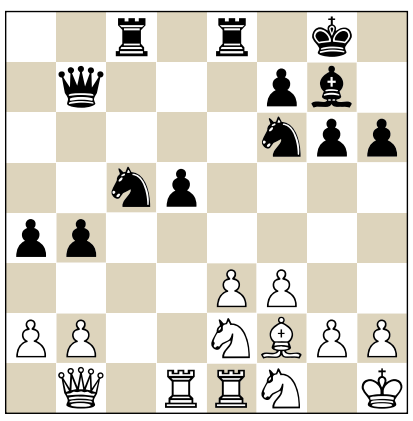
Game 1

Sergei Zhigalko
Alexey Aleksandrov
Minsk 2014

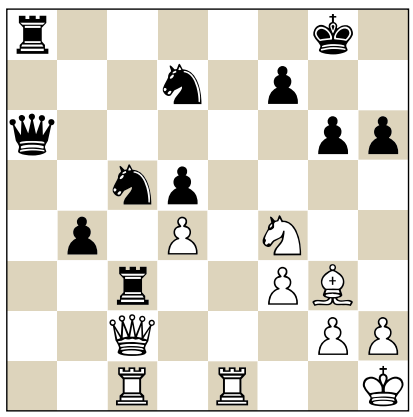
12.0-0 0-0 13.f3 White intends to put the bishop on f2 at some point, preparing e3-e4 in the long term. **13...b5!?** Not bad; Black is seeking active counterplay. This is by no means forced, of course. **14.♖ad1 ♖e8 15.♔h1 b4!**



Black has grabbed the initiative. **16.♘b1** Awkward, but 16.♘a4 ♘b6 is better for Black, since 17.♘c5? fails to 17...♘c4. **16...♕e7** After 16...c5 Black is slightly better. **17.♗f2 a5 18.♘d2 c5** Here, too, this push leaves Black with a slightly better position. **19.dxc5 ♘xc5 20.♕b1 a4 21.♖fe1 ♕b7 22.♘f1 ♖ac8**



White is suffering in a passive position, but he is still solid, of course. **23.b3 ♖e6 24.♘d4 ♖a6** Black takes control of the a-file. **25.♘g3 ♖ca8 26.♖c1 ♘fd7 27.♘ge2 axb3 28.axb3 ♖a3 29.♗g3 ♕a6 30.♘f4!** Just in time; White gives a pawn to force a repetition of moves. If Black wants to continue the game, he will now have to retreat with 30...♕b7. **30...♗xd4 31.exd4 ♖xb3 32.♕c2 ♖c3**

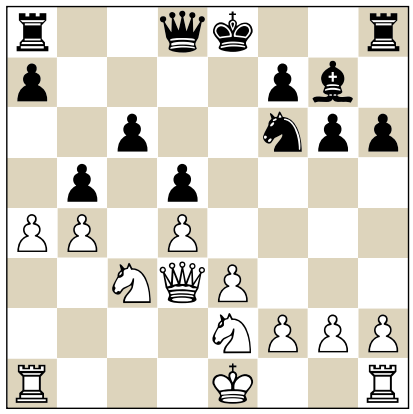


33.♕b1 ♖b3 33...♘d3 34.♘xd3 ♕xd3 35.♕xb4 ♖xc1 36.♖xc1 is just equal. **34.♕c2 ♖c3 35.♕b1** Draw.

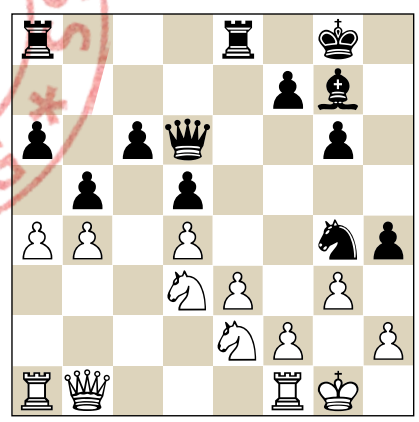
Game 2

Ildar Ibragimov
Nazar Firman
Denver 2003

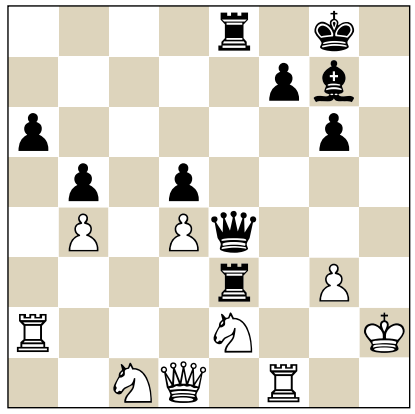
12.b4 b5!? A radical solution to the minority attack. Black intends to put a knight on the strong c4-square to compensate for the weak c6-pawn he has just created. **13.♗xf6** 13.a4 a6 14.0-0 0-0 15.a5 is the alternative. **13...♘xf6 14.a4**



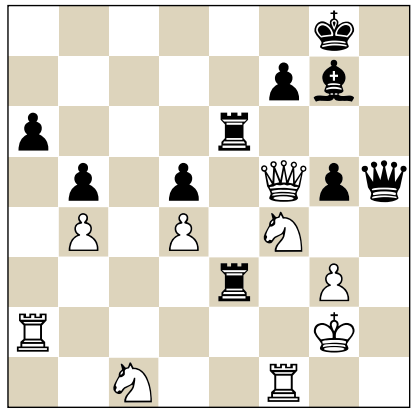
14...a6 14...a5! was a more energetic continuation. **15.0-0 0-0 16.♘c1** Manoeuvring the knight to a better position. **16...♕d6 17.♕b1 ♘g4!** 17...a5 was sufficient to equalize, but Black is playing for a win on the kingside. **18.g3 h5! 19.♘d3 ♖fe8 20.♘e2 h4**



Black has strong counterplay for his weakened queenside structure. **21.axb5 hxg3 22.hxg3 cxb5** 22...axb5 is slightly better for Black. Interesting is 22...g5!? 23.♔g2 (not 23.bxc6 ♕h6 24.♔g2 ♕h2+ 25.♔f3 ♘xe3! 26.fxe3 f5) 23...♕g6!?, with complications. **23.♔g2 ♘xe3+!** A correct sacrifice. **24.fxe3 ♖xe3 25.♖a2 ♖ae8 26.♕d1 ♕e7** 26...♗xd4!. **27.♘dc1** 27.♘g1! ♗xd4 28.♘f3. **27...♕e4+ 28.♔h2**



28...g5? 28...♕g4 29.♖f4 ♕h5+ 30.♖h4 ♕f3 repeats. **29.♕c2 ♕g4 30.♕f5!** White is better. **30...♕h5+ 31.♔g2 ♖8e6 32.♘f4?** A blunder!



32...♖xg3+! 33.♔xg3 gxf4+ 34.♖xf4 ♖g6+ 35.♔f2 ♗xd4+ 36.♔e1 ♖g1+ And White resigned ■

Hou Yifan also claims Grand Prix

MARIA EMELIANOVA

Grand Prix winner Hou Yifan explores the temptations of a shopping mall in Sharjah together with Tatiana Kosintseva and her mother Wang Qian.

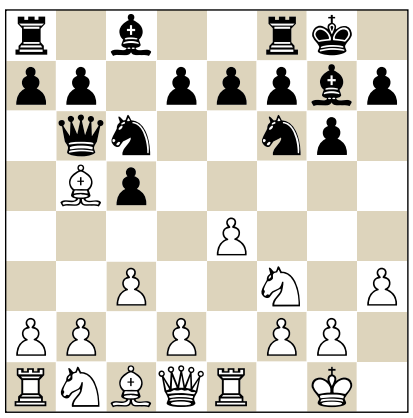
The final leg of the FIDE Women's Grand Prix in Sharjah, the third largest emirate of the United Arab Emirates, ended in a joint victory for World Champion Hou Yifan and her compatriot Ju Wenjun. Hou Yifan became the winner of the overall GP and earned the right to a match for the World Championship in the third quarter of 2015. Her opponent there will be the winner or runner-up (depending on Hou Yifan's result) of the 2014 World Championship tournament, which was scheduled for October this year. The venue of this championship was supposed to be announced by FIDE President Kirsan Ilyumzhinov at the end of the Sharjah GP. Instead, FIDE issued a press release saying that the championship 'will be postponed for a few months'.

Both Hou Yifan and Ju Wenjun have analysed their best effort from the Sharjah Grand Prix.

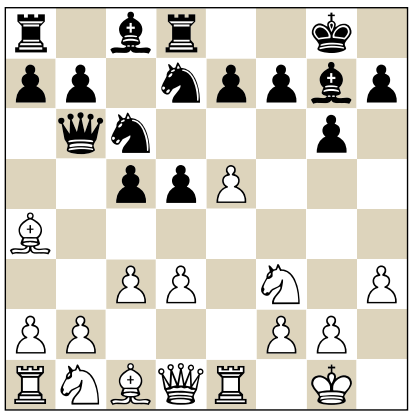
NOTES BY
Hou Yifan

SI 31.8 – B31
Nafisa Muminova
Hou Yifan
Sharjah 2014 (1)

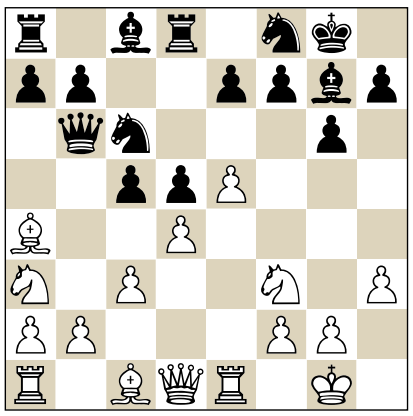
1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 g6
I guess that this was probably not a move my opponent had expected, since I have never tried it before. Although the variation is not as popular as 3...e6 these days, it's still a reliable choice against 3.♗b5.
4.0-0 ♗g7 5.c3 ♘f6 6.♖e1 0-0 7.h3!?
A move based on prophylactic thinking: before pushing d4, White wants to control the g4-square first. White is also waiting how Black will set up her position. After the immediate 7.d4, which was also tried by Nafisa, play will continue 7...d5 8.e5 ♘e4, and with this position thousands of games can be found, the general conclusion being that the situation is promising for Black.
7...♕b6!?
A move recently tried by Giri at the Tromsø Olympiad. The idea is to vacate the d8-square for the rook and to prepare ...d5. If Black pushes 7...d5 right now, then after 8.e5 the knight cannot go to e4, so White can slowly develop her position to strenghten the centre.



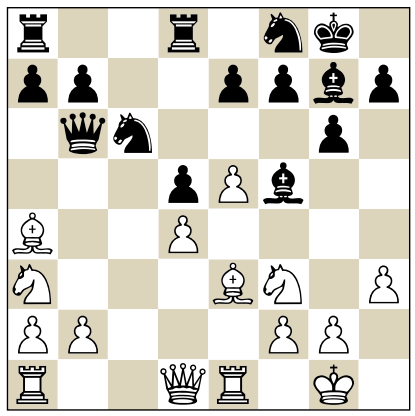
8.♗a4 ♖d8 9.d3
This seems to be the most reasonable choice for a human. The computer suggests 9.c4, with the idea to prevent ...d5 and free the c3-square for the knight. But the problem is the weakening of d4 and the bishop on a4, which suddenly becomes useless.
After 9...d6 Black has comfortable play.
9...d5 10.e5 ♘d7



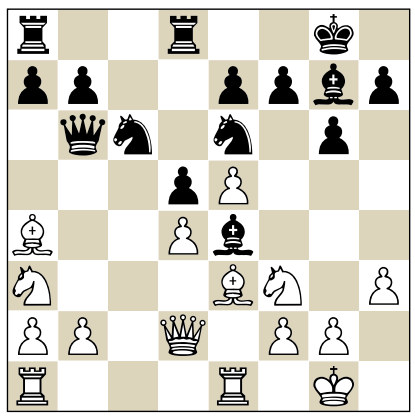
11.d4 Pushing 11.e6 looks attractive, but it doesn't work: 11...fxe6 12.♘g5 ♘de5!. With all her queenside pieces still at home there should be insufficient compensation for White.
11...♘f8
A very common manoeuvre in this structure. The knight intends to go to e6, attacking the d4-pawn. Normally d4 is the weakness in White's position.
12.♘a3 Here 12.b3!? looks weird but works: 12...♘e6 13.♗e3 cxd4 14.cxd4, with unclear play.



12...cxd4!
After the knight has gone to a3, Black needs to exchange on d4 right away, as the possibility of White playing dxc5 has to be avoided. The main point is that White's knight has already left the b1-square, which means that it cannot go to the powerful c3-square without wasting a few tempi.
13.cxd4 ♗f5 Threatening ...♗e4. Again it is proven that in such pawn structures d4 is always the key element.
14.♗e3!? A very aggressive move. Frankly speaking, it's a bit dubious. The most common choice here was 14.♗c2 ♗xc2 15.♘xc2 ♘e6 16.b3 ♖ac8 17.♗e3, with equal chances.



14...♘e6
This move came to my mind naturally, but then I started thinking: why not take on b2?: 14...♕xb2?! 15.♘b5 ♘b4. Somehow I hesitated for quite a long time here, especially when I had this brilliant idea after 16.♖e2 (16.♗g5! is even stronger!) 16...♘c2! 17.♖c1 ♕b4! (17...♘xe3 was the move I calculated first, but it will run into 18.♕e1! and the queen is trapped) 18.♗xc2 ♗xc2 19.♖exc2 ♕xb5 20.♖c7, and the active placement of her pieces combined with the open c-file will provide White enough compensation for the pawn.
15.♕d2 ♗e4



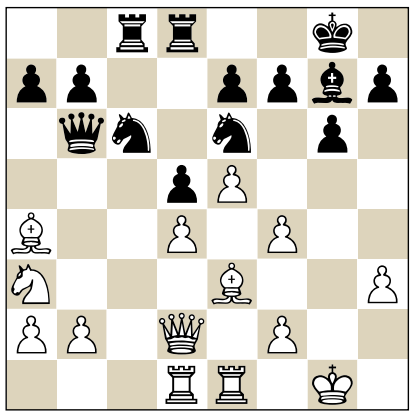
16.♖ad1? An obvious mistake. In any case it was better not to weaken the kingside voluntarily. Nafisa had probably missed 16.♘g5 ♘xg5 17.♗xg5. Now the e7-pawn is hanging, so Black cannot win the d4-pawn. After 17...f6 18.exf6 exf6 19.♗e3 White needs

some moves to coordinate her pieces and move some of them from the queenside to the centre, but since the position is not entirely open, there should be enough time for her to do this. The game is about equal.

16...♗xf3 17.gxf3 ♖ac8

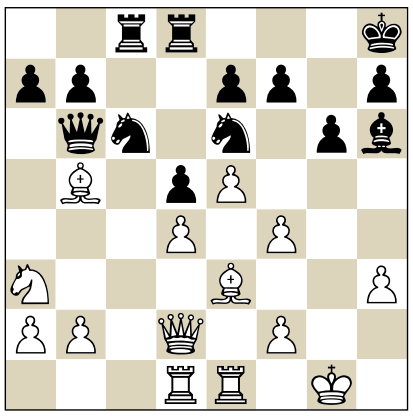
Now the position is clearly better for Black. The weakened pawn structure on the kingside will offer some strong squares for the black pair of knights.

18.f4

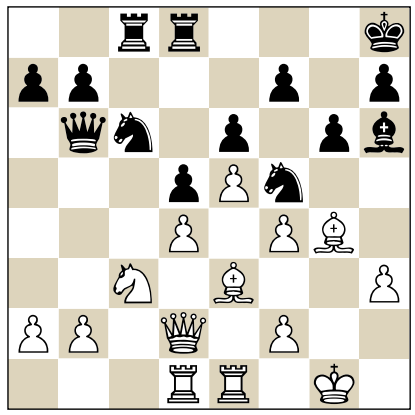


18...♔h8 I also looked at 18...♗f8!? with the clear plan of ...♘g7-f5 and ...e6 to give a new lease of life to the bishop. But my main concern during the game was 19.f5! (White has to do something to stop Black's plan and stir up some trouble) 19...gxf5 20.f4, and although there's a material advantage for Black, it is suddenly the black king that is in danger. On top of that, the bishop on f8 has become useless.

19.♗b5 ♗h6



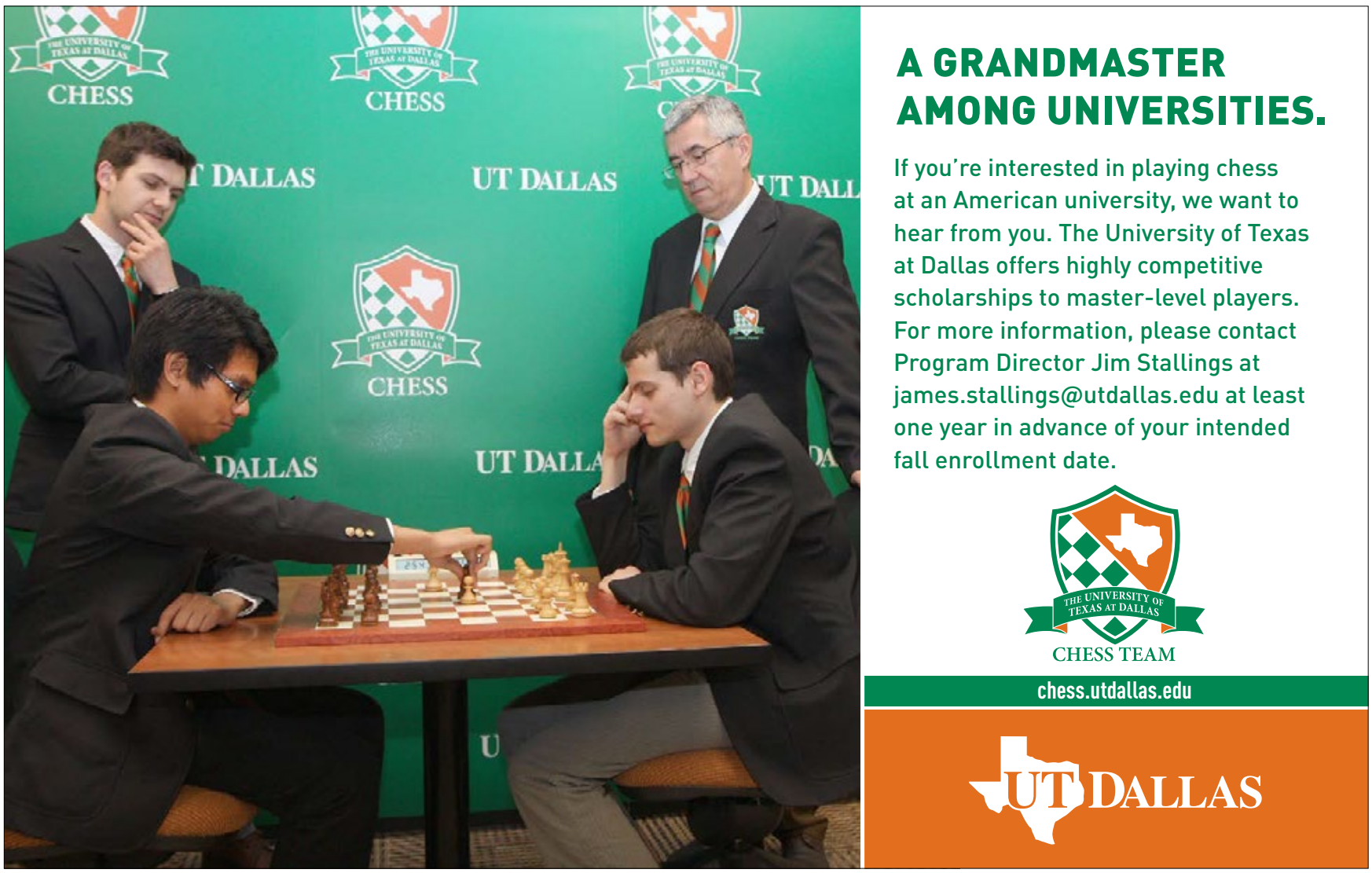
The same plan as connected with ...♗f8 before, the only difference being that White doesn't have the f5 sacrifice here. **20.♗e2 ♘g7 21.♘b5 ♘f5 22.♘c3 e6 23.♗g4**



23...♘h4!?

Another key moment in this game. Now Black has to seriously consider whether the two knights should be kept on the board or whether the f5-square should simply be strengthened with 23...♘ce7. Generally speaking, both ways are acceptable for Black.

24.♔h1 ♖g8!?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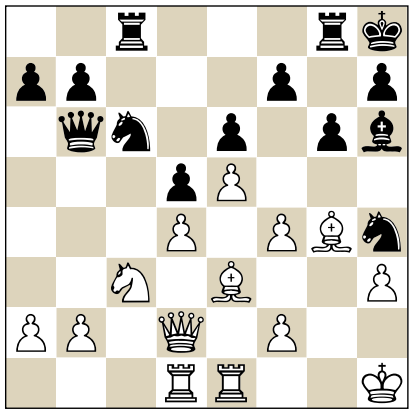
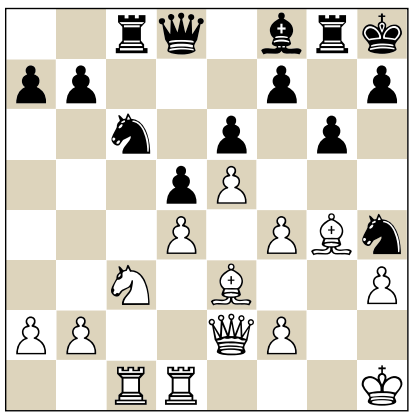


Starting from here, I went for a very interesting plan: changing the focus, moving the pieces to attack the kingside. I also realized that the bishop on h6 had to be activated, so that the h-pawn could be pushed to h5.

25.♖c1 ♗f8 26.♖ed1 ♕d8 27.♕e2



27...♖g7! Not falling into the trap. If 27...h5 28.♗xh5!.

28.♘a4

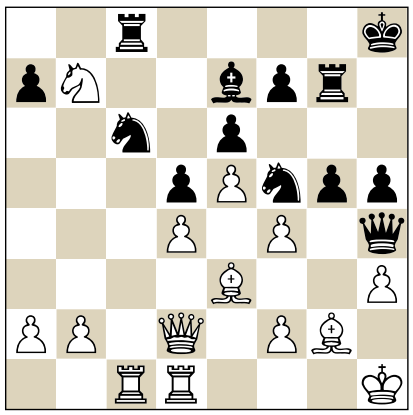
To create some counterplay on the queenside, but it's already too late.

28...h5 29.♗f3 ♘f5 Threatening ...♕h4 followed by ...♘xcd4.

30.♗g2 ♕h4 31.♕d2 ♗e7

The g5-breakthrough is coming soon now.

32.♘c5 g5 33.♘xb7

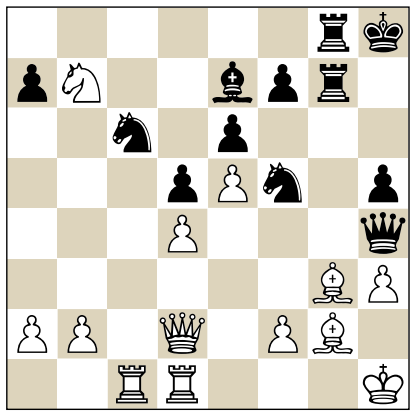


33...gxf4?!

Both players were under time-pressure and I missed the correct move order: 33...♖cg8!. Now, exchanging on f4 and then taking on g2 cannot be prevented.

34.♗xf4 ♖cg8 35.♗g3

This is the difference. But of course, despite this defence Black is still winning with:

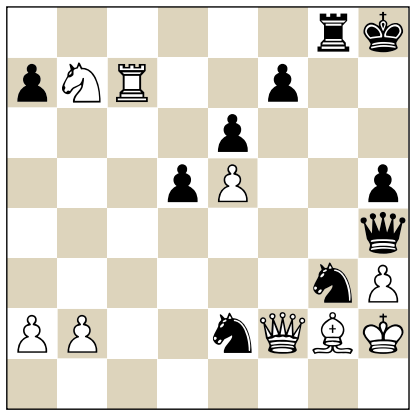


35...♖xg3!

Instead, Black should, of course, not be tempted to play 35...♘xg3+? 36.fxg3 ♖xg3??, because of 37.♕h6 mate.

36.fxg3 ♘xg3+ 37.♔g1 ♗g5 38.♕f2 ♗xc1 39.♖xc1 ♘xd4 40.♖e1

After 40.♖c7 there is 40...♘de2+ 41.♔h2



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

41...♘f1+! 42.♕xf1 ♕g3+ 43.♔h1 ♕e3! 44.♕f6+ ♖g7, and White is mated. I just wanted to show this brilliant combination!

40...♘gf5 41.♘d6 ♘f3+! 42.♕xf3 ♕xe1+

White resigned.

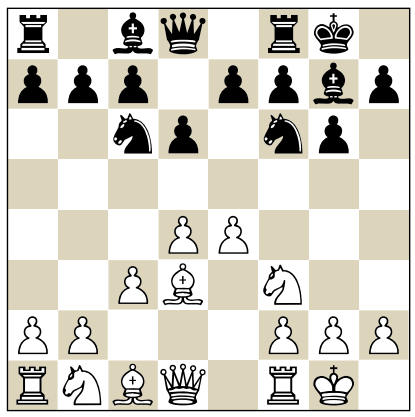
NOTES BY

Ju Wenjun

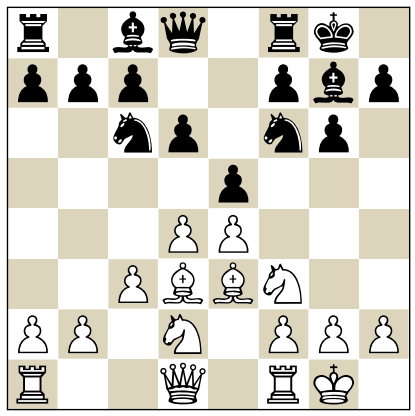
PU 4.4 – B07
Zhu Chen
Ju Wenjun
Sharjah 2014 (2)

In Round 2, I was Black against former World Champion Zhu Chen. We had played the King's Indian Defence in May of this year. Therefore, this time I wanted to play something different trying to avoid her preparation.

1.d4 d6 2.e4 ♘f6 3.♗d3 g6 4.♘f3 ♗g7 5.0-0 0-0 6.c3 ♘c6



7.♗e3!? A new idea. **7...e5 8.♘bd2** After 8.h3?! Black equalizes immediately with 8...d5.



8...♘g4 There are many options here, but a KID player will never miss a chance to play ...♘g4.

Other moves are 8...♘h5 9.♖e1 ♘f4 10.♗f1 (10.♗xf4 exf4 11.b4 leads to sharp complications: 11...g5 12.b5 ♘e5 13.dxe5 dxe5 14.♘c4 g4 15.♘fxe5 ♕g5 16.♕d2 ♗xe5 17.g3 f6, with unclear play) 10...h6 (10...♕f6? gives White an advantage after 11.g3).

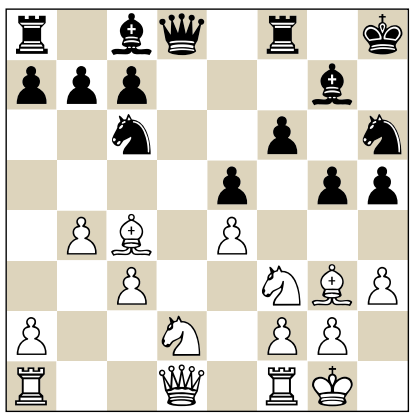
Or 8...exd4, when after 9.cxd4 d5 10.e5 ♘g4 11.♗g5 f6 12.exf6 ♘xf6 13.♖e1 the computer likes White's initiative.

But Black can also play 8...h6!? 9.dxe5 ♘g4 10.exd6 ♘xe3 11.fxe3 ♕xd6, with compensation for the pawn, or 8...d5 9.dxe5 ♘xe4 10.♘xe4 dxe4 11.♗xe4 ♘xe5, with a white edge.

9.♗g5 f6

The bishop swap 9...♗f6 10.♗xf6 ♘xf6 11.♖e1 slightly favours White.

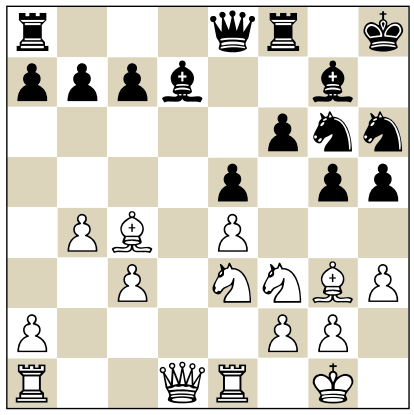
10.♗h4 h5 11.♗c4+ ♔h8 12.h3 ♘h6 13.dxe5 dxe5 14.b4 g5 15.♗g3



15...♘e7 Alternatively, 15...♕e8 16.a4 ♘f7 17.a5 ♘d6 18.♗d5 ♘e7 is another style and another story.

16.♖e1! An interesting manoeuvre which I had missed.

16...♘g6 17.♘f1 ♗d7 18.♘e3 ♕e8

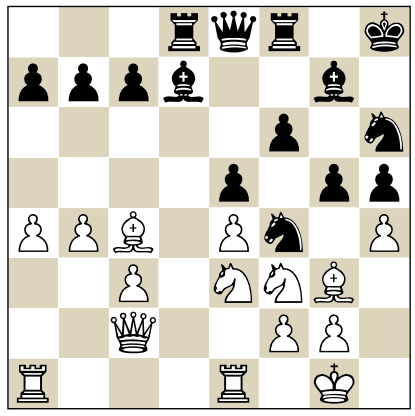


19.a4?!

More active was 19.♕c2, when after 19...♘f4 20.♖ad1 ♖d8 21.♖d2 White will double the rooks and have a clear advantage.

19...♘f4 20.h4 ♖d8 21.♕c2

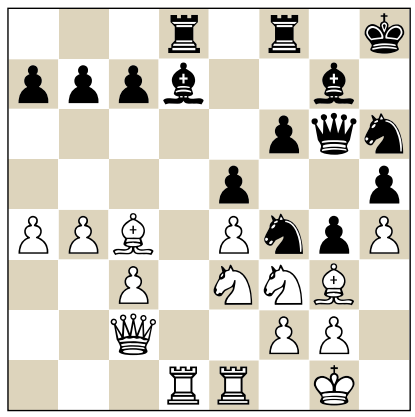
Taking the pawn with 21.hxg5 fxg5 22.♘xg5 was not good, because of 22...♗f6 23.♘f3 ♗g4 24.♕c2 ♗xf3 25.gxf3 h4 26.♗xf4 exf4 27.♘f5 ♘xf5 28.exf5 ♕h5, and White is in trouble.



21...♕g6?

Better was 21...g4 22.♘d2 f5 23.exf5 ♘xf5 24.♘e4, with only a slight edge for White.

22.♖ad1 g4



23.♘d2?

Here both of us had missed the strong 23.♘d4!! when after 23...exd4 24.♖xd4 ♘e6 (24...♘h3+ loses after 25.gxh3 gxh3 26.♕d2; and 24...♘xg2 25.♘xg2 leaves White with a clear advantage) 25.♖xd7 ♖xd7 26.♗xe6 ♖e7 27.♗d5 Black is much worse and White's advantage should be sufficient to be converted to a win after, for example, 27...f5 (27...c6 fails to 28.♗d6) 28.exf5 ♘xf5 29.♗e4 ♖xe4 30.♕xe4 ♗xc3 31.♖c1, and Black is lost.

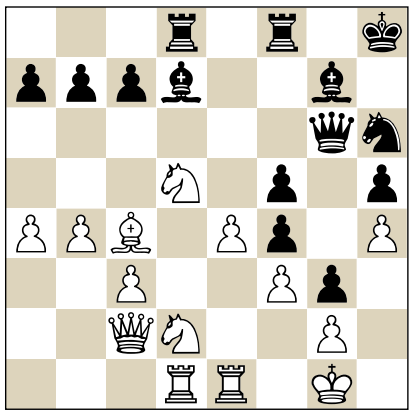
23...f5 24.♗xf4 exf4 25.♘d5 g3! 26.f3

Black gets good counterplay after 26.fxg3 ♕xg3 27.e5 ♘g4 28.♘f3 ♖de8.

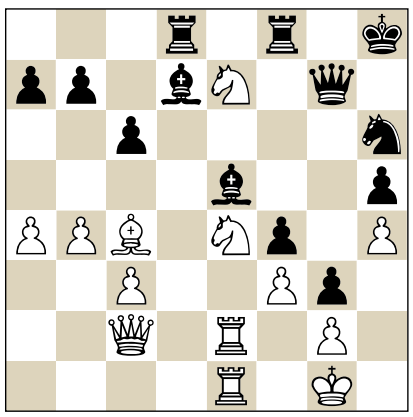
2013-14 Women's Grand Prix - final standings

				Geneva	Dilijan	Tashkent	Khanty-Mansiysk	Lopota	Shariah		Best 3
1	Hou Yifan	CHN	2629	45			160	160	145	4	465
2	Humpy Koneru	IND	2613		160	160		50	60	4	380
3	Ju Wenjun	CHN	2538	75		70		120	145	4	340
4	Anna Muzychuk	SLO	2561	130	120		85	50		4	335
5	Nana Dzagnidze	GEO	2541	100	120		65	90		4	310
6	Bela Khotenashvili	GEO	2518	160	10	120		20		4	300
7	Kateryna Lahno	RUS	2540	60		120	85			3	265
8	Dronavalli Harika	IND	2513		60	85		75	87.5	4	247.5
9	Anna Ushenina	UKR	2488	75	80		45		87.5	4	242.5
10	Tatiana Kosintseva	RUS	2476	100	90		15		40	4	230
11	Zhao Xue	CHN	2542			85	45	30	87.5	4	217.5
12	Alexandra Kosteniuk	RUS	2533	45		55	110	50		4	215
12	Olga Girya	RUS	2493	10	30	55	130			4	215
14	Elina Danielian	ARM	2458		30	40		120	50	4	210
15	Antoaneta Stefanova	BUL	2488		60	30	65	75		4	200
16	Tuvshintugs Batchimeg	MGL	2346	20	60		15		87.5	4	167.5
17	Nafisa Muminova	UZB	2332			20	30	10	20	4	70
18	Victoria Cmilyte	LIT	2525	30	30					2	60
19	Zhu Chen	QAT	2461						30	1	30
20	Guliskhan Nakhbayeva	KAZ	2300			10				1	10
20	Alina l'Ami	ROM	2446							1	10

First place: 160 points, second 130, third 110, fourth 90 and then 80, 70, 60 etc. down to 10 points for last place. In case of a tie the points are split evenly.



26...fxe4?
A move I cannot understand myself. It just gives White an extra tempo. After 26...♗e5 Black is better.
27.♘xe4 ♗e5
By now Zhu was under time-pressure.
28.♖d2
Clearly stronger was 28.♕d2! ♗f5 (or 28...c6 29.♘c5! cxd5 30.♘xd7 ♖xd7 31.♖xe5) 29.♘g5, and White has a dangerous initiative.
28...♕g7 29.♖de2 c6 30.♘e7



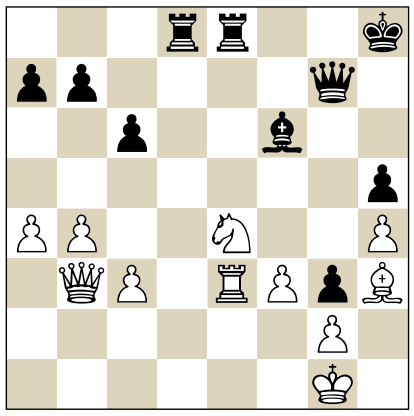
30...♗f5! A strong move. Not good was 30...♘f5 31.♘g5 ♗xc3 32.♘g6+ ♕xg6 33.♕xc3+ ♕g7 34.♖e7, and this nice move decides the issue.

Sharjah 2014				cat. X
				TPR
1 Ju Wenjun	CHN	2559	8½	2695
2 Hou Yifan	CHN	2661	8½	2686
3 Dronavalli Harika	IND	2521	6½	2553
4 Zhao Xue	CHN	2508	6½	2554
5 Anna Ushenina	UKR	2487	6½	2556
6 Tuvshintugs Batchimeg	MGL	2346	6½	2569
7 Humpy Koneru	IND	2598	5½	2481
8 Elina Danielian	ARM	2490	5	2455
9 Tatiana Kosintseva	RUS	2494	4½	2425
10 Zhu Chen	QAT	2461	3½	2360
11 Nafisa Muminova	UZB	2315	3	2331
12 Alina l'Ami	ROU	2446	1½	2186

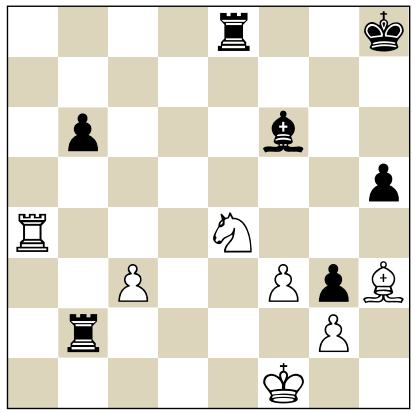
MARIA EMELIANOVA

Joint winner with the World Champion, way ahead of the rest. Ju Wenjun had saved her best performance for the last Grand Prix leg in Sharjah.

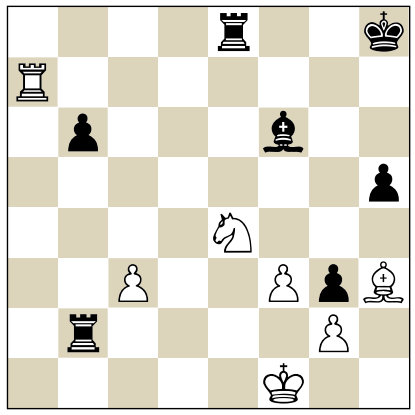
30...♕xe7 would lead to a very unclear position after 31.♘g5 ♗f5 32.♕c1 ♖fe8 33.♖xe5 ♕xe5 34.♖xe5 ♖xe5 35.♗f1.
31.♘xf5 ♘xf5 32.♗e6 ♘e3
Now Black is firmly in control, as the e-file is blocked and the attack on h4 is imminent.
33.♕b3 ♗f6 34.♗h3 ♖fe8 35.♖xe3 fxe3 36.♖xe3



36...♕f7? Immediately winning was 36...♗xc3 37.♖xc3 ♕d4+, and mate will follow soon.
37.♕b1 ♕a2 This move may not be the best, but it was just so tempting!
38.♖e1 ♕xb1 39.♖xb1 ♗xh4 40.♔f1 b6! 41.b5 c5 42.a5 ♖d5 43.axb6 axb6 44.♖a1 c4 45.♖a4 ♖xb5 46.♖xc4 ♖b2 47.♖a4 ♗f6



48.♖a7 After the more tenacious 48.♘xg3 ♖b1+ 49.♔f2 ♗xc3 50.♘e4 b5 Black should win with accurate play.



48...♗xc3! Obviously, the bishop cannot be taken.
49.♗f5 ♖f2+ 50.♔g1 ♗d4 51.♖d7 ♖b2+ 52.♔f1 ♖a8
White resigned. ■

Jan Timman

Topalov remains tops

Recently, FIDE implemented an extensive package of measures to combat fraud in competition chess. Reading through the measures that have been drawn up, you get the feeling that they are mainly intended for open tournaments, team competitions and other big amateur events. Strikingly, there doesn't seem to be the least suspicion about the players at the very top. This has not always been the case. Less than a decade ago, when computers were less powerful, such accusations were flying around with abandon. Frankly speaking, I look back on that time in utter amazement. Things began at the World Championship tournament in San Luis in Argentina. Topalov started with 6½ out of 7. This led other participants to the suspicion that Topalov had had cybernetic assistance during the games. This was supposed to have happened in the following manner: Topalov's manager Danailov was always in the audience, close to the players. From that position, he was supposed to have given Topalov instructions. I have the feeling that Morozevich and Kasimdzhanov still believe in this scenario. Kasimdzhanov, in particular, was very outspoken at the time. In an interview with this magazine he claimed that he might as well go to Uzbekistan to pick cotton if such things kept happening. At the time, I thought to myself that this was actually a good idea, especially for his own peace of mind. In the world of cotton pickers you're far less likely to fall prey to paranoia.

However absurd these accusations, a year later they were taken to an entirely new level. During the World Championship match in Elista, Danailov – backed by Kramnik's opponent, Topalov – accused Kramnik of cheating. The accused had suddenly become the accuser. This notorious affair has entered chess history as 'Toiletgate'. Danailov's groundless accusations were fairly generally condemned, so there is little point in dragging them up again. One question still continues to intrigue me, though: did Danailov and Topalov believe their own accusations? As for Danailov, I think the answer is clear: his aim was to effectively derail Kramnik, who was leading Topalov in the match. Topalov is a different story: he must really have believed in his case. This was confirmed by his comments in 2010, during his match against Anand. But later, doubts must have crept in. Not so long ago, he was clearly disinclined to enter into the subject of 'Toiletgate', comparing it to the yoghurt affair during the Karpov-Kortchnoi match in Baguio. The implication was clear: 'Toiletgate' was no more than a storm in a teacup, an incident that got blown out of proportion by the press, but otherwise of little consequence. It is difficult to accept this viewpoint, since 'Toiletgate' led directly to Kramnik losing a game by forfeit. Topalov should never have accepted this, so this remains a permanent blot on his escutcheon.

> 'In the post-Kasparov era he occupied first place in the world rankings for a total of 27 months.'

Sometimes such unsavoury details make people forget what an incredibly strong player Topalov is. In the post-Kasparov era he occupied first place in the world rankings for a total of 27 months during two separate periods. So it's not so strange that a player of his strength should score 6½ out of 7. In 2011, Topalov lost to Kamsky in their Candidates' match. Topalov took his defeat hard and was extremely critical of his own play, saying that someone who made such mistakes did not deserve to fight for the world title. This was typical of the optimalist Topalov: only the highest honour counts. He is not going to participate in the coming Grand Prix

series, because he is only interested in the number one spot in the rankings, something he cannot be sure of – and no wonder if you consider that Caruana will also be there. After 2011 Topalov played infrequently, but then he claimed victory in the previous Grand Prix series. But again he was dissatisfied about his play. Early this year, Topalov's play was marred by strange off-moments that cost him games that had started out well. A good example was his game against Giri in Stavanger. Strong and enterprising play had yielded him a winning position as Black. With an obvious advance he could have decided the game, but instead of this winning move he made an inexplicable king move that ended up costing him the game. When such things happen, you might think that a player is getting old; next year, Topalov will be 40. But it quickly became clear that he had lost nothing of his old élan. At the Olympiad in Tromsø and the European Club Cup in Bilbao, Topalov scored the best Board 1 result, while in St. Louis he drew attention by his excellent comeback after two early defeats.

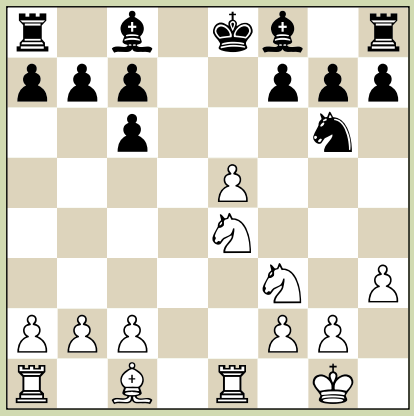
Dreev recently observed that you should not study Nakamura's games if you want to become a stronger chess player. A remark that, I think, hits the nail right on the head. You are surely better off concentrating on Botvinnik's game books. But Topalov's wins are also excellent instruction material, particularly because of their dynamism and straightforwardness. I will give you two examples from St. Louis.

NEW IN CHESS

Veselin Topalov enjoys a cup of coffee outside the Saint Louis Chess Club before the start of the sixth round of the Sinquefield Cup.

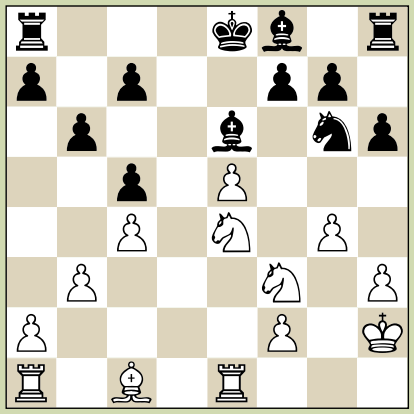
RL 7.4 – C67
Hikaru Nakamura
Veselin Topalov
St. Louis 2014 (8)

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 ♘f6
The Berlin Defence, who doesn't play it? Nakamura goes for the endgame.
4.0-0 ♘xe4 5.d4 ♘d6 6.♗xc6 dxc6 7.dxe5 ♘f5 8.♕xd8+ ♔xd8 9.h3 ♔e8 10.♘c3 ♘e7 11.♘e4 ♘g6 12.♖e1

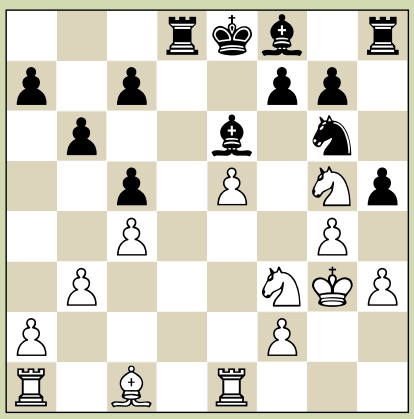


12...h6
This position was already under scrutiny before the Kasparov-Kramnik match of London 2000, in which the Berlin Defence was Kramnik's pet weapon. White has tried all kinds of moves here: 13.a4, 13.♗d2, 13.b3, 13.h4 and 13.♘d4. The latter is crucial, because it forces Black to defend accurately. Nakamura manages to think up yet another one.
13.♔h2
Not even such a bad move in itself, but the idea behind it – preparing the advance g2-g4 – is dubious.
13...c5 14.c4 ♗e6 15.b3 b6 16.g4 Playing into Black's hands. A developing move like 16.♗b2 would have been better.

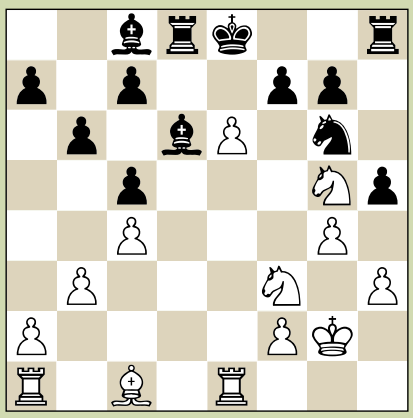
Jan Timman



16...h5! Square g5 has become of minor importance. It is good for Black to open the h-file. In the Berlin Defence, it is often problematic for Black to connect his rooks. Now they both get an open file without White being able to become particularly active.
17.♔g3 ♖d8 18.♘eg5 A shot in the dark. He should have gone 18.♗g5.

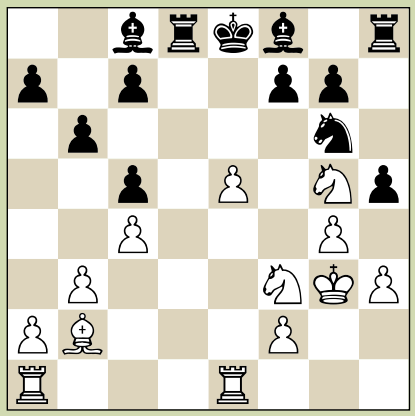


18...♗c8! Sharply calculated. Black does not have to be afraid of the advance of the e-pawn. After 18...♗e7 19.♘xe6 fxe6 20.♗e3 White would have had his way.
19.♗b2 This cannot have been the plan. White had undoubtedly had high hopes of 19.e6, but after 19...♗d6+ 20.♔g2

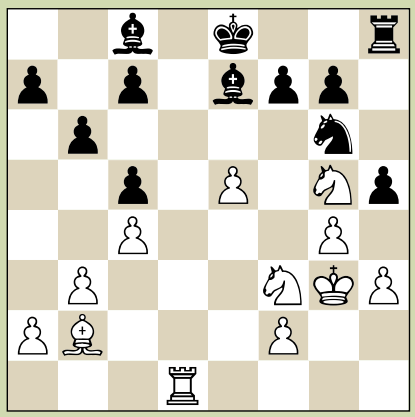


ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

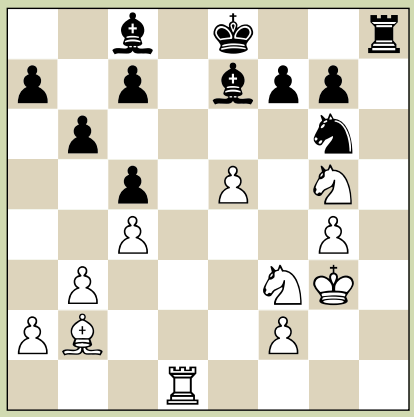
20...f6! 21.♘f7 hxg4 22.hxg4 ♗b7! 23.♘xh8 ♘xh8 Black has two lethal Horwitz bishops on neighbouring diagonals. White is powerless to prevent the black knight from becoming involved.



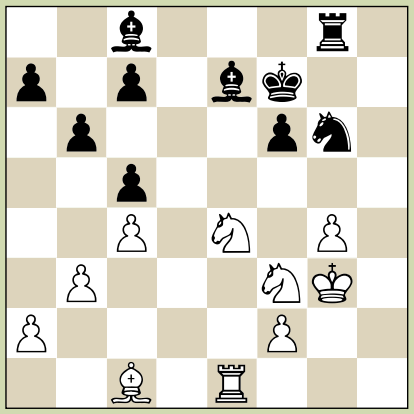
19...♗e7! Keeping the exchange sacrifice in the position.
20.♖ad1 ♖xd1 21.♖xd1



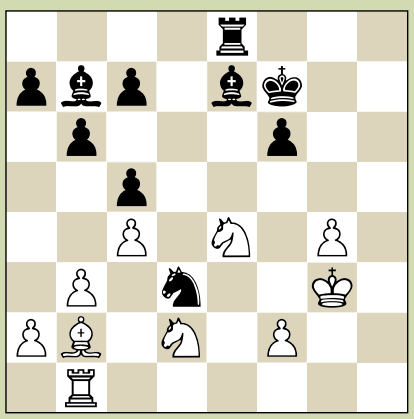
21...hxg4 The computer prefers 21...h4+, and it is true that Black is better after 22.♔h2 ♗b7 23.♖e1 ♘f4 24.♖e3, but it would be hard to break through the White defences. This is why Black is opening the position; a perfectly logical decision, since he has the bishop pair.
22.hxg4



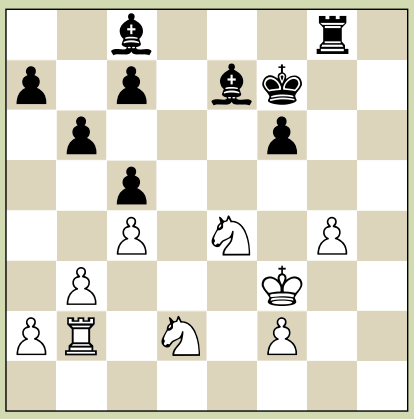
22...f6 The position is opened even more, exposing the white king.
23.exf6 gxf6 24.♖e1 Obvious, but the computer sees a better option: 24.♘e4 ♔f7 25.♖d5!, intending to possibly take the rook to h5. This is the only way White could have preserved a precarious balance. **24...♔f8 25.♘e4 ♔f7 26.♗c1 ♖g8**



27.♖h1 Having to defend such a position is a thankless task. White is looking for counterplay, but the rook will soon be forced to return. 27.♗d2 would have been more tenacious.
27...♗b7 28.♖e1 ♖e8 29.♘fd2 ♘e5 30.♗b2 ♘d3 31.♖b1

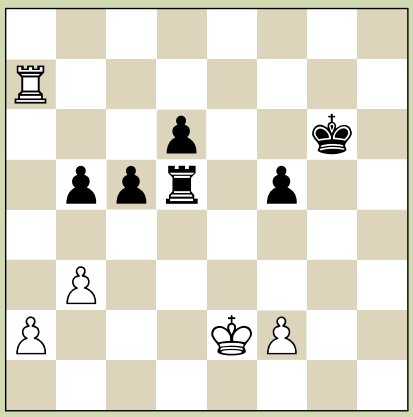


31...♖g8 The rook returns in order to besiege the white g-pawn.
32.♔f3 ♘xb2 33.♖xb2 ♗c8



The bishop is returning as well, which means that the g-pawn will be lost. The rest is a matter of technique.

34.g5 f5 35.♘f6 ♖xg5 36.♘d5 ♗b7 37.♖b1 ♖g4 38.♖h1 ♗d6 39.♔e2 ♖d4 40.♖h7+ ♔g6 41.♖d7 ♗xd5 42.cxd5 ♖xd5 43.♘c4 b5 44.♘xd6 cxd6 45.♖xa7

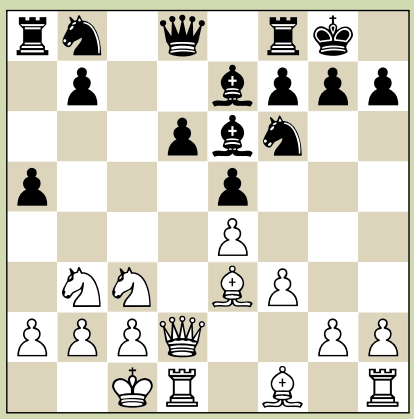


45...b4! Strong technique.

46.a4 bxa3 47.♖xa3 ♖e5+ 48.♔d3 ♔g5 49.♖a6 ♖e1 50.♔d2 ♖e6 51.♖b6 ♔g4 52.b4 cxb4 53.♖xb4+ ♔f3 54.♔d1 f4 55.♖d4 ♖e4 56.♖d2 d5 57.♖a2 ♔g2 White resigned.

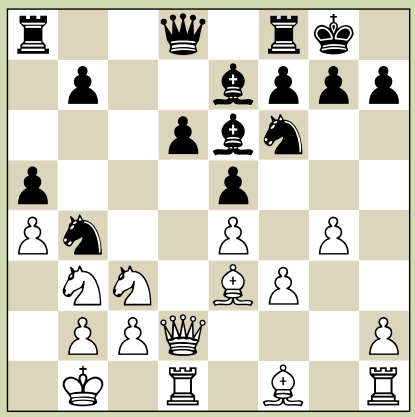
SI 14.1 – B90
Veselin Topalov
Maxime Vachier-Lagrave
St. Louis 2014 (5)

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 a6 6.f3 e5 7.♘b3 ♗e6 8.♗e3 ♗e7 9.♕d2 0-0 10.0-0-0 a5



A fairly common move, but not one I would like to play here. Black, in fact, robs himself of all possible queenside breaks.

11.a4 ♘a6 12.g4 ♘b4 13.♔b1



13...♕c7

The normal move is 13...♖c8, as Vachier-Lagrave played against Nijboer in Plovdiv 2008. But it doesn't make much difference.

14.g5 ♘h5 15.♗b5 ♖ac8 16.♖hg1 f5 17.gxf6 ♘xf6

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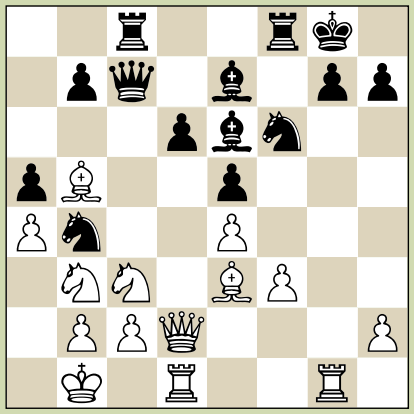
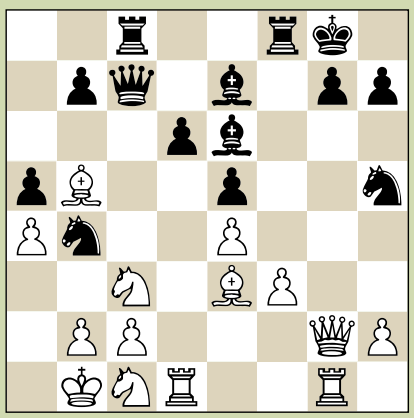
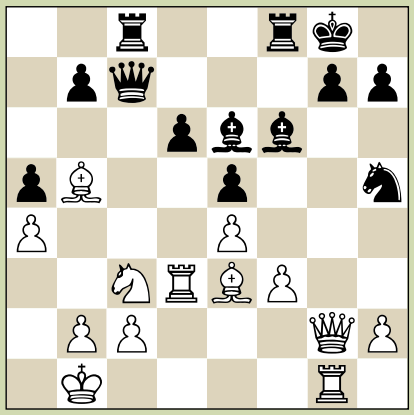


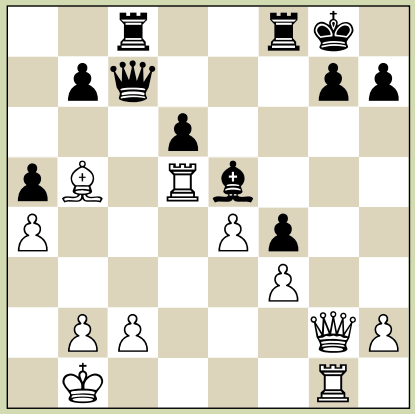
18.♕g2
Topalov is playing on both wings. Black will have to decide how to cover his g-pawn.
18...♘h5 19.♘c1! An excellent plan. The knight goes to d3 to exchange off the active black queen's knight.



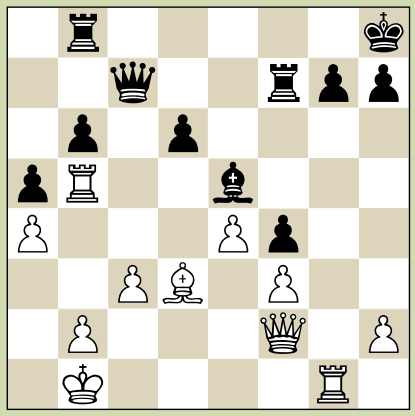
19...♗f6 The start of a bad plan. Black should have provided extra cover for the g-pawn with 19...♖f7, although even then, White would still have been better.
20.♘d3 ♘xd3 21.♖xd3



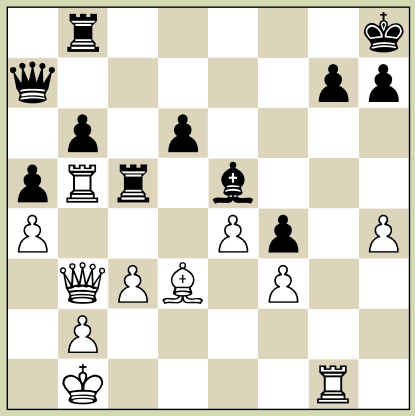
21...♘f4? This was the plan. But this knight sortie would only have been justified if Black had been able to take back on f4 with the rook.
22.♗xf4 exf4 23.♘d5 ♗xd5 24.♖xd5 ♗e5



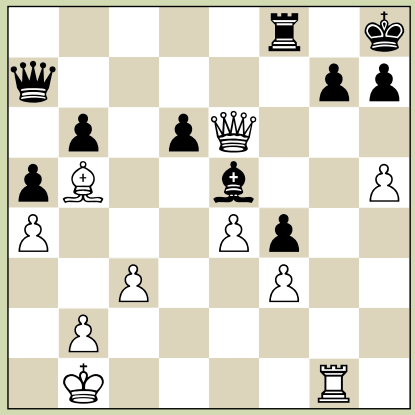
25.c3 White underlines his opponent's problems. The black bishop is biting on granite, and there is no counterplay to be had. White will be able to reinforce his position at leisure. In a higher sense, White is already winning.
25...♖f6 26.♕f2 b6 27.♗a6 ♖b8 28.♗d3 ♔h8 29.♖b5 ♖f7



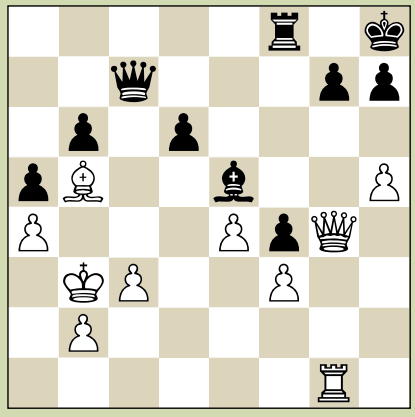
30.h4 This advance is usually played far earlier in the Sicilian. Its aim is clear: White wants to block the black kingside majority and conquer square f5 to serve as a gateway for his major pieces to penetrate the black position.
30...♕a7 31.♕c2 ♖c7 32.♕b3 ♖c5



33.♕e6
The queen penetrates. Now Black has nothing better than to try to swap the queens. But his problems will continue to haunt him in the endgame.
33...♖xb5 34.♗xb5 ♖f8 35.h5



35...♕c7 Black goes for the sit-back-and-wait approach and dies a quiet death. 35...♕f7, to force the queen swap, was an absolute necessity. Remarkably enough, the computer then assesses the endgame as only slightly better for White. In actual practice, Black's defensive task is utterly depressing, but admittedly, there is no crystal-clear winning plan for White. A possible continuation is: 36.♕xf7 ♖xf7 37.♔c2 ♖c7 (otherwise the king will penetrate) 38.♔d3 ♔g8 39.♗c4+ ♔f8 40.♖g5 h6 41.♖f5+ ♔e8! 42.♗d5 ♖c5!, and Black is holding for the moment.
36.♔a2 ♕d8 37.♕g4 ♕c7 38.♔b3

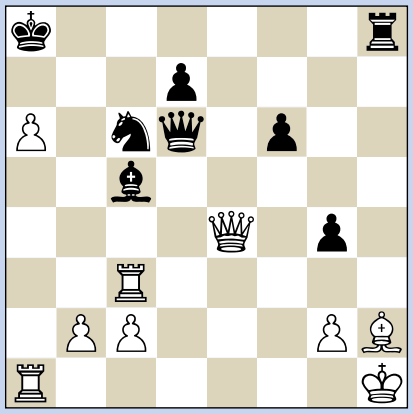


The king is put in position. Black is powerless.
38...♖c8 39.♕e6 ♕c5 40.♖g5 ♖b8 41.♖f5
Black resigned. Seemingly a bit early, but the endgame after 41...♕c8 42.♕xc8+ ♖xc8 43.♗d7 ♖d8 44.♖f7 is hopeless. The white king will penetrate via c4. ■

Beware: Brilliancy!

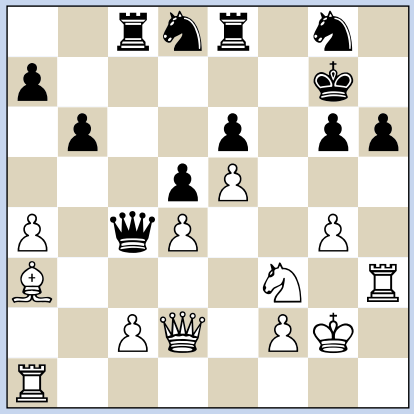
Solutions of page 37

Yochanan Afek



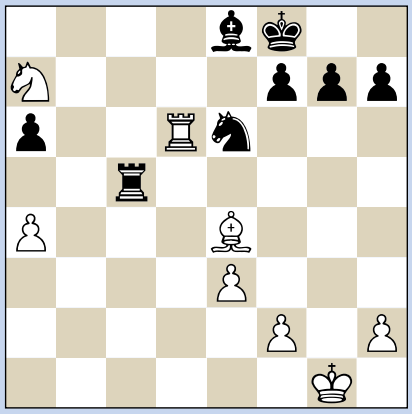
Guerrero-Polgar
Tromsø 2014 (2)

White could have spoiled the retirement of the greatest female player ever with the rather simple **33.♖h3! ♖xh3 34.gxh3 g3 35.♗g1** and wins.



Jeitz-Cori
Tromsø 2014 (4)

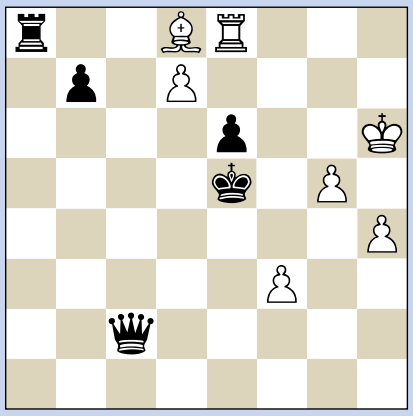
White missed the crusher **24.♘g5! hxg5** when his attack is irresistible, both after **25.♖ah1** and **25.♕xg5**



Mamedov-Onischuk
Tromsø 2014 (11)

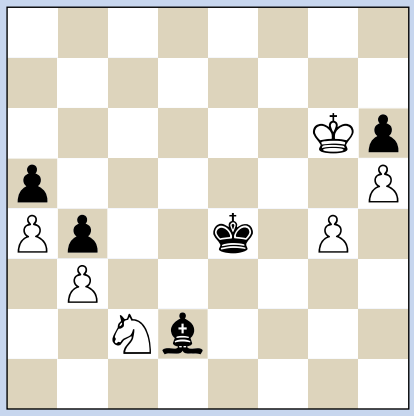
Correct was **37...♖c7! 38.♘c6** 38.♖xa6 ♘c5 is a deadly fork. **38...♘c5 39.♗g2 ♘b7** winning a piece.

Readers are invited to send in brilliant missed opportunities by titled players to: afekchess@gmail.com



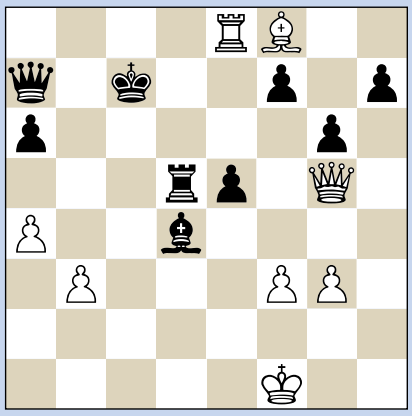
Ortiz-Parligras
Tromsø 2014 (5)

Black could force a draw by **42...♖xd8! 43.♖xd8 ♕c7!** Not 43...♕c6 44.g6 ♕a4 45.h5 ♕f4+ 46.♔h7 ♔d6 47.h6. **44.♖f8 ♕xd7 45.g6 ♕e7! 46.g7 ♕xh4+ 47.♔g6 ♕g3+ 48.♔h7** etc.



Guseinov-Ni Hua
Tromsø 2014 (8)

White could have saved the day with the waiting move **50.♔g7! ♔d3 51.♘xb4+!** Now the black king will be too late. **51...axb4** 51...♗xb4 52.♔xh6=. **52.a5 ♔e4 53.a6 ♗e3 54.g5 hxg5 55.h6 ♔d5 56.h7 ♔c6 57.♔g6 ♗d4 58.♔xg5 ♔b6 59.♔f5 ♔xa6 60.♔e4 ♗c3 61.♔d5 ♔b5 62.♔d6** With a fortress!



Kojima-Movsesian
Tromsø 2014 (1)

Precise calculation would have done the trick: **37.♕e7+ ♖d7 38.♕b4! a5 39.♕c4+ ♔b7** And here White even has a choice, the most straightforward being probably **40.♕c8+ ♔b6 41.♖xe5! ♕c7 42.♖b5+ ♔a7 43.♖xa5+! ♕xa5 44.♕xd7+** and wins.

Susan Polgar Chess Daily News

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From *Lasker* to *Larsen*

John Nunn's latest effort is a chess course using lessons drawn from the games of the second World Champion, Emanuel Lasker. You could say that this book has been 40 years in the making. That many years ago, John Nunn mentioned in an interview that it would be an interesting idea for someone to write a collection of Lasker's best games. It seems that just like in business, the person who names the problem, owns the problem. From that moment on, we've been waiting for the Doc to write his book on Lasker!

Using the games of a strong classic player as a study tool is a very good idea, and it's one I've used myself a few times in the past, most recently, before the London Classic in 2013. I spent a great deal of my limited time analysing Capablanca's games, which turned out to be really helpful. Studying classic games allows you to do the thing you never manage normally: just ignore the opening phase and really focus on the general chess skills you want to study. As the Doc explains, 'I might have chosen a modern player, but one problem with contemporary top-level chess is that subtle opening innovations often play a crucial role. It's difficult to explain such innovations without giving a great deal of background information and, as such innovations are backed up by many hours of computer analysis, they can also be quite complicated. Once again, I felt that going into great detail about certain openings would prove a distraction from the main point of the book.'

And why choose Lasker? In the Doc's words: 'Lasker had what is often termed a "universal" style, in that he could handle all types of positions well, and therefore a study of his games would benefit all aspects of the reader's play. His style tended towards straightforward plans which he executed precisely. Such clear-cut play is especially instructive because it's possible to understand what he was trying to do and transfer the learning to one's own games... A final point is that there is relatively little good material available on Lasker's games.'

> 'I've changed my opinion completely! He was really *really* strong! Glad I didn't have to play against him ☺.'

That last comment is most certainly true. I think I know my classics fairly well, but Lasker was probably the World Champion I knew least about before I read this book. I think I always had the feeling that Lasker was a bit of an 'unfair' World Champion: he beat an aging Steinitz and played World Championship matches infrequently and then only against second-rate players like Marshall and Janowski. After looking through some of the games here though – aided by John Nunn's excellent instructive commentary – I've changed my opinion completely! He was really ***really*** strong! Glad I didn't have to play against him ☺.

The book is essentially divided up into fourteen chapters, each chapter presenting games based on a theme like 'Attack and Defence', 'Pawn Structure', 'Defending Inferior Positions' and 'Playing for a Win'. The comments to the games are not variation-heavy with Nunn's emphasis being on drawing general lessons from the games, rather than analysing them to exhaustion. There are a huge number of such helpful bits of advice throughout the book and I wrote lots of them down while working my way through it. I'm sure I might just read through them before a game just to give myself a little nudge to play sensible chess. For example, I liked a number of the Doc's comments in the Attack and Defence chapter to this game of Lasker's against Tarrasch:

FR 5.3 – C12
Emanuel Lasker
Siegbert Tarrasch
World Championship
Germany 1908 (11)

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.♗g5 ♗b4 5.exd5 ♕xd5 6.♘f3 c5 7.♗xf6 gxf6 8.♕d2 ♗xc3

9.♕xc3 ♘d7 10.♖d1 ♖g8 11.dxc5 ♕xc5 12.♕d2 ♕b6 13.c3 a6 14.♕c2 f5 15.g3 ♘c5 16.♗g2 ♕c7 17.♕e2 b5 18.0-0 ♗b7 19.c4 b4 20.♕d2 ♖b8 21.♕h6 ♗xf3 22.♗xf3 ♕e5 23.♖fe1 ♕xb2 24.♕f4 ♖c8 25.♕d6 f6 26.♗h5+ ♖g6 27.♗xg6+ hxg6 28.♖xe6+ 1-0

First of all, talking about attacking the castled king:

'Moving all your pieces towards the enemy king often involves taking them away from the centre of the board, and their new positions may prove ineffective if the attack does not succeed.'

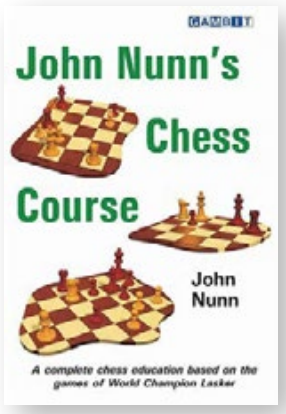
... Then talking about the attack against the uncastled king:

'One of the main objectives during the opening is to gain control of the centre, and this influences how pieces are developed ... after castling the rooks are often developed to the d- and e-files. If the enemy king is still in the centre of the board, then this type of development will automatically move the pieces into good attacking positions. Here there is no risk involved since no decentralization is necessary.'

... And finally:

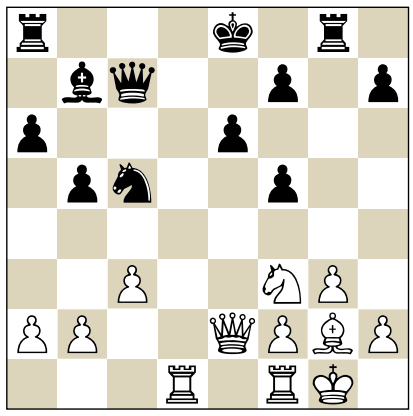
'The problem with having a king in the centre ... is that the king is vulnerable to threats from both flanks.'

I don't think I've ever read a better exposition of why you should castle, and what the dangers are of leaving your king in the centre! The game against Tarrasch is a great example of these themes.

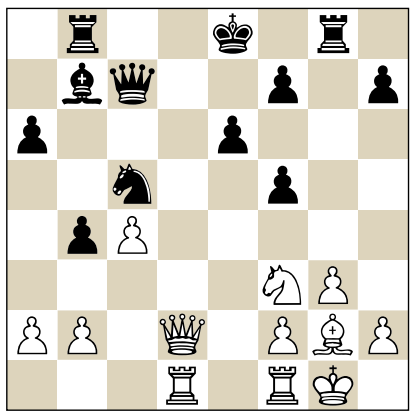


John Nunn's Chess Course
by John Nunn
Gambit, 2014

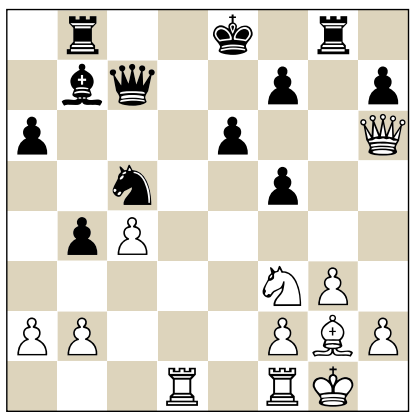
Lasker hits Tarrasch on the queenside:



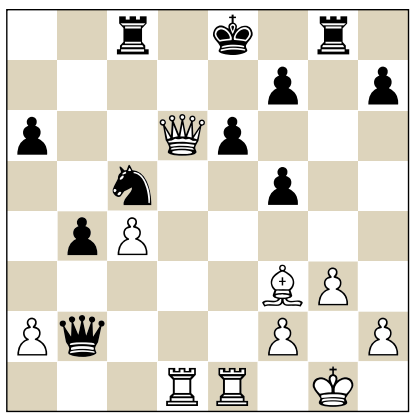
19.c4 b4 20.♕d2 ♖b8



…then he moves over to the kingside:
21.♕h6

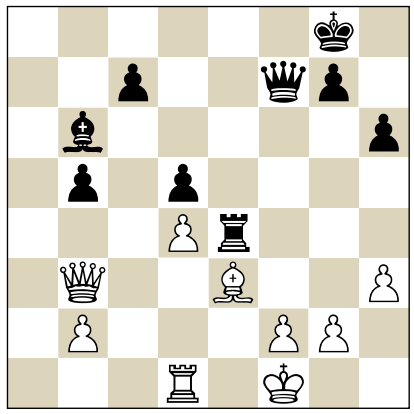


...and he never loses his centralization after 25.♕d6:



I also felt that Nunn did an excellent job in the chapters about 'Manoeuvring' and 'Endgames: Making Something from Nothing'. In particular I liked his comments to the games against Pillsbury and Rubinstein.

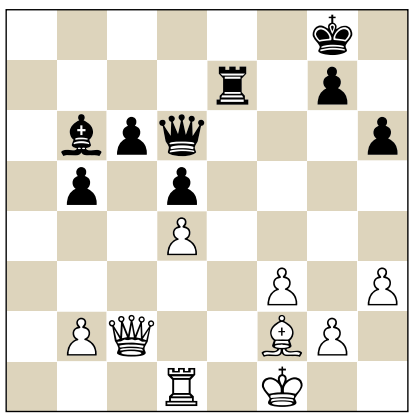
If you played through these games normally, you might easily fall asleep and assume that the Black players lost by doing so too. However, Nunn follows the course of the game with great patience, explaining very clearly where small gains were made, and where the decisive errors came. Nunn also manages to bring across the importance of the small underlying battles that occur during such a protracted exchange. Sometimes, winning such a battle is not so significant in the purely chess sense, but it does give the opponent a feeling that the momentum is going against him. For example, in the Rubinstein game, the initial early exchanges are all about whether White can play f3 and ♗f2 to free up his position a little bit. Rubinstein keeps Lasker bottled up until as if by magic on move 36...



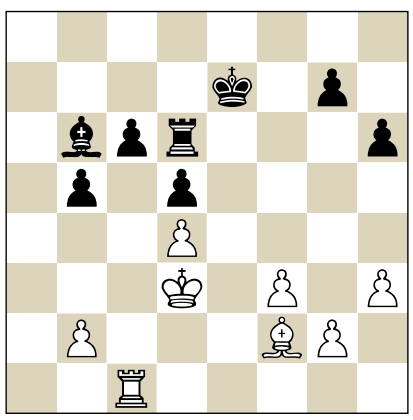
Black finds that he can't both defend the b5- and d5-pawns and stop White from playing f3. It's not world-shattering on the board, but these little defeats play on your mind when you are defending.

Not soon after, Rubinstein made another little mistake that allowed White to exchange off queens and get his king past the e-file to defend the d-pawn.

Sadler on Books



40...♔f7 41.♖c1 ♖e6 42.♕f5+ ♖f6 43.♕e5 ♖e6 44.♕xd6 ♖xd6 45.♔e2 ♔e7 46.♔d3



Still fine for Black, but you can imagine the pressure growing on Rubinstein with every mini-defeat he suffered!

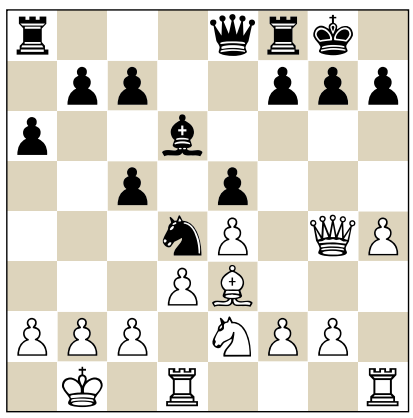
Perhaps the Lasker game that most appealed to me though was this game from the 1896 World Championship against Steinitz. I'd played through it before, but never really paid much attention to it. Nunn's comments show just how clever Lasker's strategy was:

RL 8.3 – C68
Emanuel Lasker
William Steinitz
World Championship
Moscow 1896 (10)

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 a6 4.♗xc6 dxc6 5.♘c3 ♗g4 6.h3 ♗xf3 7.♕xf3 ♘e7 8.d3 c5 9.♕g3 ♘g6 10.♗e3 ♗d6 11.0-0-0 0-0 12.h4 ♘f4 13.♔b1 ♘e6 14.♕g4

Lasker has a slight edge here. 'Lasker moves his queen from g3 so that it will not be attacked after an exchange on d4'.

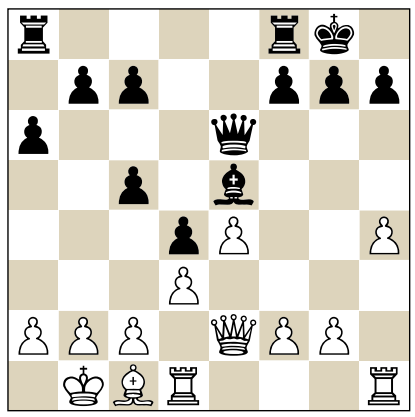
14...♕e8 15.♘e2 ♘d4



16.♘xd4 This took me by surprise, but it's a really good decision. Based on a simple tactic that prevents Black from undoubling his queenside pawns, White uses clever, accurate play to gain time for a huge kingside pawn advance.

16...exd4 16...cxd4 17.♗h6 wins the exchange. **17.♗h6!** Drawing the black bishop to e5. **17...♗e5 18.♗c1** And now retreating: the job is done! f4 will come with tempo, and e5 after that! So clever!

18...♕e6 19.♕e2 Again, impressive: Lasker has just played two retreating moves but his attack is now ready to uncoil...



19...f5 20.f4 ♗d6 21.e5 ♗e7 22.h5 ♖ad8 23.g4 b5 24.♖dg1 c4 25.♖g2 cxd3 26.cxd3 fxg4 27.♖xg4 ♖f5 28.♖hg1 ♗f8 29.♖g5 ♖xg5 30.♖xg5 ♖d5

And now I loved the final manoeuvre from Lasker. No desperate attempts to mate Black, just regrouping by centralizing. Classic and unstoppable.

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Dennis Monokroussos, The Chess Mind

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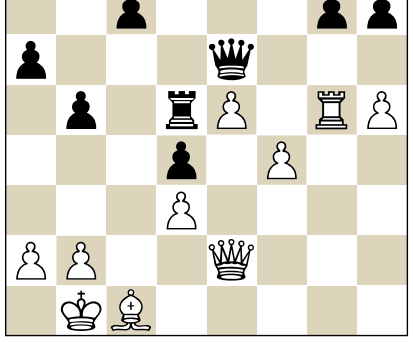
Bent Larsen and his wife Lizzie at their home in 1964.



31.♕f3 ♖d7 32.♕e4 ♖d5 33.♖g2 Coming round to e2 to support the advance of the f-pawn.
33...c6 34.♖e2 ♕g4 35.e6 ♗e7 36.♖c2 Another very nice move, picking apart the weaknesses in Black's position.
36...♕xh5 37.♖xc6 ♖d8 38.♖xa6 ♕e8 39.♖a7 h5 40.f5 h4 41.♕g4 1-0 So impressive! One of my favourite games now.

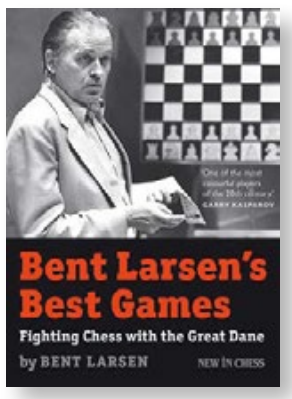
And now on to two Larsen books: ***Larsen Part I 1935-1965*** by Jan Løfberg (Løfbergs) and ***Bent Larsen's Best Games*** by Bent Larsen (New In Chess). I will come right out and say it: Larsen Part I 1935-1965 is my all-time favourite Danish language chess book! It's so frustrating! The author has done a fantastic job, gathering together all the games that Bent Larsen played between 1935 and 1965, and adding masses of photos, extracts from newspapers and lots of annotations by Bent himself. I had hoped that some Dutch and schoolboy German might help with some of it, but I have to confess that I've been thoroughly stumped. Despite that I've had a great time reading through it. Whenever I've really wanted to know what Larsen meant, then I've dipped into *Bent Larsen's Best Games* by Bent Larsen – a complete collection of pretty much every game Bent Larsen has annotated (up to about 1980) in various languages, now brought together in one English-language collection (also excellent!). And otherwise I've just had a fun time hopping through the 1088 games in the book, following opening lines through the years and marvelling at the way Larsen put his tournaments together. Really so incredible how often Larsen could lose a couple of bad games on the trot and then bounce back and beat a Petrosian or a Spassky.

I'm always on the lookout for offbeat opening lines so I did seriously consider seeing whether I could punt any of Larsen's favourites at the Olympiad in Tromsø, but I soon had to give up the idea: 1.f4 d5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.e3 g6 4.b4 is only for Larsen, not for mere mortals!

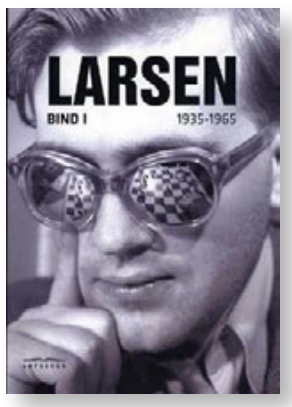
While following through all the Nimzo-Indians Larsen had played between 1935 and 1965, I came across the following gem. If Larsen had found the right finish, it could have been a Danish Immortal!

NI 1.7 – E59
Jens Enevoldsen
Bent Larsen
Copenhagen 1956 (5)

Just as an aside, the Larsen book made me quite curious about all the other Danish players who were his competitors in his youth. I've seen the name Enevoldsen in lots of old 3.f3 Grünfeld games (Larsen won a nice game against Harald Enevoldsen in one of the old main lines) so they seem to have been pioneers of this line. Would be really nice to know more about them!
1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♗b4 4.e3 c5 5.♘f3 0-0 6.♗d3 d5 7.0-0 ♘c6 8.a3 ♗xc3
This was before the time of the Larsen system with 8...dxc4 9.♗xc4 ♗a5.
9.bxc3 dxc4 10.♗xc4 ♕c7 11.♕e2 e5 12.d5 e4
A typical counter. Suddenly, White is in big trouble.
13.dxc6 ♘g4 14.g3 exf3 15.♕xf3 ♘e5 16.♕f4 ♗h3 17.♖d1 ♖ad8



Bent Larsen's Best Games
by Bent Larsen
New In Chess,
2014



Larsen
by Jan Løfberg
Løfbergs Forlag,
2014

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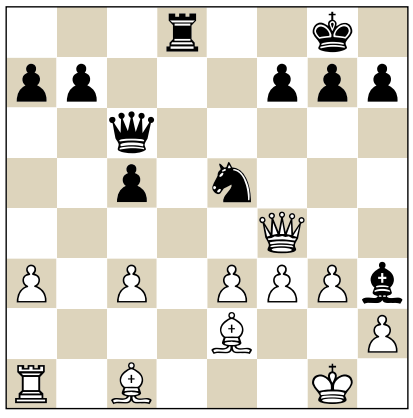
18.♖xd8 ♖xd8 19.♗e2 ♕xc6 20.f3



20...♘g6

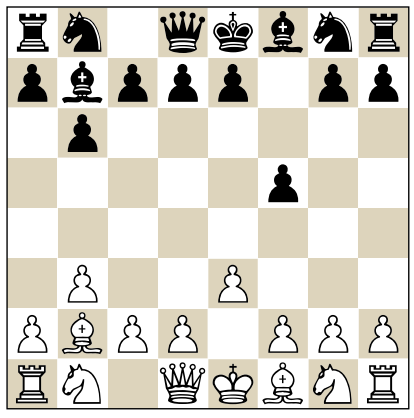
Larsen points out in his notes that he missed a quite fabulous win here. It's a really unique theme: 20...♖d1+ 21.♗xd1 (21.♔f2 ♘g4+ wins the queen) 21...♕b5 22.c4 ♕a5 wins! Amazing! Never seen anything like this!

21.♕c4 ♗e6 22.♕b5 ♕xb5 23.♗xb5 c4 24.e4 ♖d1+ 25.♔f2 ♘e5 26.♔e2 ♖h1 27.♔e3 ♖e1+ 28.♔d4 f6 29.f4 ♖d1+ 0-1

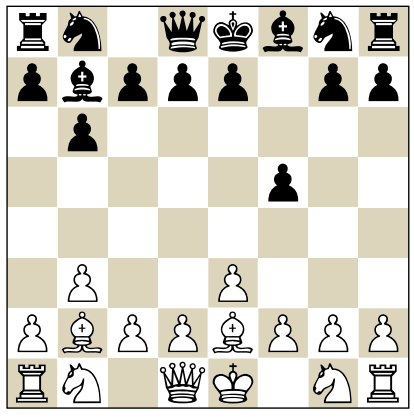
And maybe the funniest of all, taken from the English-language book:

VO 8.1 – A01
Bent Larsen
Juan Manuel Bellon
Palma de Mallorca 1971 (13)

1.b3 b6 2.♗b2 ♗b7 3.e3 f5



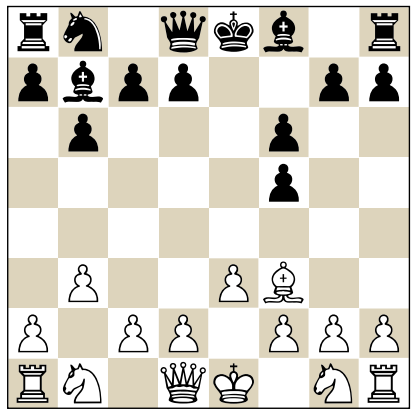
4.♗e2 A stunning little idea!



4...♘f6 4...♗xg2 5.♗h5+ g6 6.♗f3 ♗xh1 7.♗xh1 leads to a great position in which both rooks are hanging!; 4...♘h6 isn't mentioned by Larsen. I guess that the computer's 5.♗h5+ ♘f7 6.♘f3 g6 7.♗xh8 ♘xh8 8.♘e5 is pretty good for White. I think we're still playing chess here though I can't be sure.

5.♗xf6 Bizarrely enough, Blatny reached this position against Tate a few years ago, but he just played 5.♗f3. I think Larsen would have been shocked! He just considered 5.♗xf6 to be much better for White.

5...exf6 6.♗f3



To be honest, I think that Larsen is right. The opposition of bishops looks very pleasant for White: Black can't afford to exchange off the light-squared bishops.

6...♘c6 7.♘e2 g6 8.c4 ♗d6 9.♘bc3 0-0 10.a3 ♖e8 11.b4 ♕c8 12.d4 ♘d8 13.c5 ♗f8 14.♘f4 ♔g7 15.h4 ♘e6 16.♘xe6+ ♖xe6 17.♘d5 ♖e8 18.h5 ♗xd5 19.♗xd5 c6 20.♗a2 d5 21.cxd6 ♗xd6 22.♕f3 ♕a6 23.♕xc6 ♖ed8 24.b5 ♕xa3 25.♔e2 ♕b2+ 26.♔f3 g5 27.g3 ♔h6 28.♗e6 f4 29.gxf4 gxf4 30.♖ag1 fxe3 31.fxe3 ♖ab8 32.♕e4 f5 33.♕h4 1-0

In conclusion, three great books this issue. Get them all! ■

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Parimarjan Negi became the youngest GM in the world in 2006. At the chess olympiad 2014 he won bronze with India on board one. His first Fritz Trainer DVD „The Modern Scotch" (released in September) has become a top seller.

Ten years ago **Rustam Kasimdzhanov** surprised the chess world by winning the FIDE world chess championship title: The Uzbekian top player helped Anand in WCh matches in 2008 and 2010.

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11.11.2014	Round 3	Daniel King/Loek van Wely
12.11.2014	Round 4	Daniel King/Rustam Kasimdzhanov
14.11.2014	Round 5	Simon Williams/Irina Krush
15.11.2014	Round 6	Daniel King/Yannick Pelletier
17.11.2014	Round 7	Simon Williams/Loek van Wely
18.11.2014	Round 8	Daniel King/Loek van Wely
20.11.2014	Round 9	Simon Williams/Irina Krush
21.11.2014	Round 10	Daniel King/Simon Williams
23.11.2014	Round 11	Chris Ward/Parimarjan Negi
25.11.2014	Round 12	Simon Williams/Rustam Kasimdzhanov

Each round begins at 12:00 CET – Changes possible!

And in addition to those, the following grandmasters will also be helping with the commentary on the WCh: **Simon Williams, Loek van Wely, Yannick Pelletier, Nicholas Pert, Irina Krush and Chris Ward.**

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Le Quang Liem

CURRENT ELO: 2706
DATE OF BIRTH: March 13, 1991
PLACE OF BIRTH: Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam
PLACE OF RESIDENCE: St.Louis, Missouri, USA

What is your favourite colour?
Black.

What kind of food makes you happy?
A lot of traditional Vietnamese food, such as Pho and spring roll. I also like Japanese food.

And what drink?
Hot chocolate.

Who is your favourite author?
J.K. Rowling.

What was the best book you ever read?
Harry Potter. The author's imagination is really admirable.

What is your all-time favourite movie?
Transformers.

Do you have a favourite actor?
Brad Pitt.

And a favourite actress?
Angelina Jolie.

What music do you like to listen to?
Pop & ballads.

Do you have a favourite painter or artist?
Leonardo da Vinci.

What was your best result ever?
Winning the World Blitz Championship in 2013. This is quite difficult to repeat ☺.

Who is your favourite chess player of all time?
Kasparov, for his deep opening preparation and beautiful attacking style.

Is there a chess book that had a profound influence on you?
Dvoretsky's Endgame Manual.

What was the most exciting chess game you ever saw?
Kasparov-Topalov, Wijk aan Zee 1999.

What is the best chess country in the world?
Russia.

What are chess players particularly good at (except for chess)?
Adapting to different circumstances.

Do chess players have typical shortcomings?
I am not sure, probably not.

What is it that you appreciate most in a person?
Intelligence.

What is it that you dislike in a person?
Dishonesty.

Do you have any superstitions concerning chess?
I usually keep certain habits during a tournament. If I lose a game, however, I might change my pen or jacket, etc.

Who or what would you like to be if you weren't yourself?
When I was younger, I really wanted to become a doctor.

What is the best piece of advice you were ever given?
Never give up.

What is your greatest fear?
Being sick.

Where is your favourite place in the world?
My home.

Is there something you'd love to learn?
As many foreign languages as possible. I am taking a beginner Spanish class in Webster University right now.

What would you save from your house if it were on fire?
All people. After that, if I had enough time, I would probably save my laptop, which contains lots of my work.

How do you relax?
Listening to music, or reading a book.

If you could change one thing in the chess world, what would it be?
I would remove the Zero Tolerance Rule. I've never been late for any game, but have seen many players being punished for being a few minutes late.

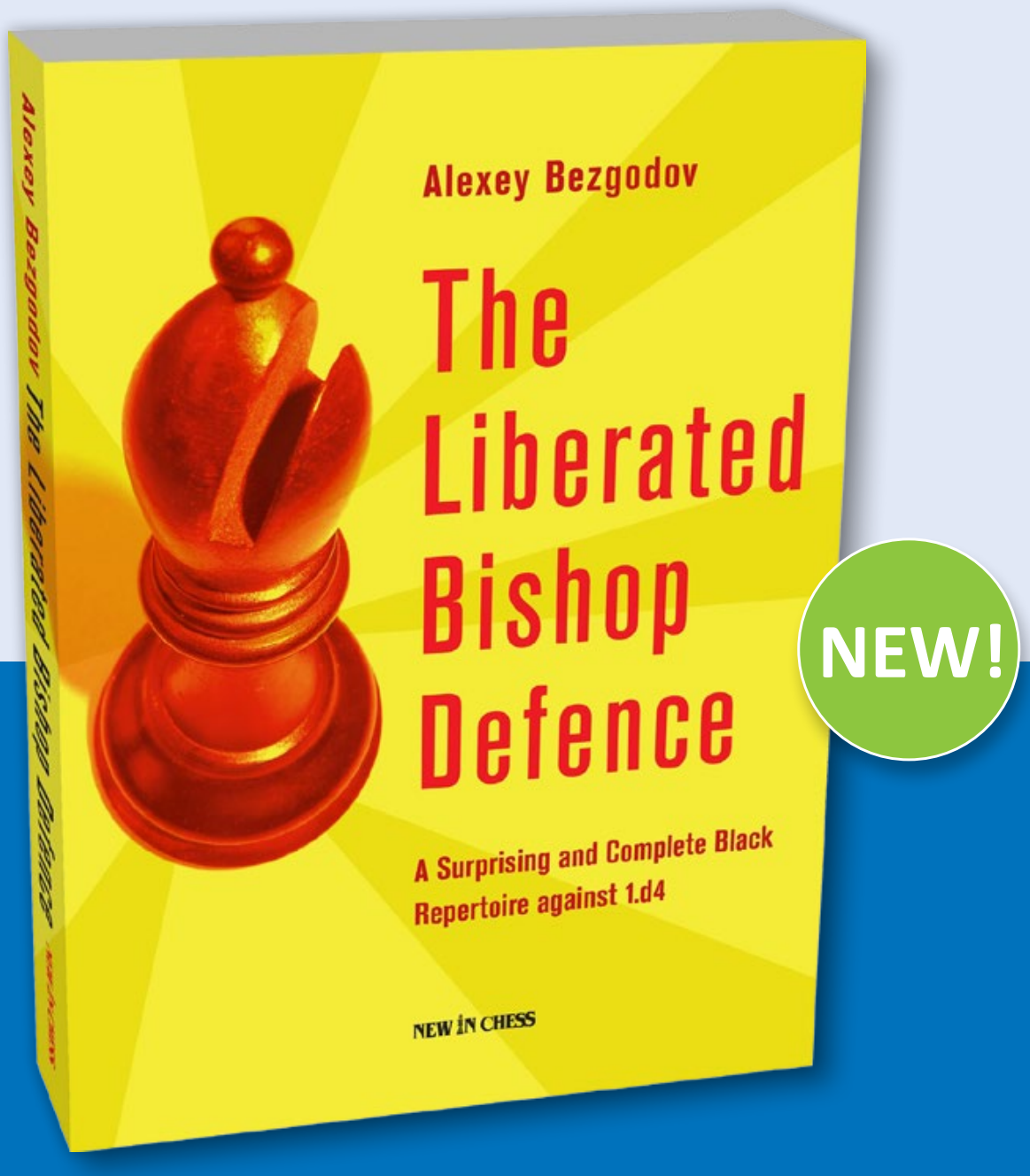
What is the stupidest rule in chess?
I think all rules of the game are acceptable and make chess interesting in their own way.

What will be the nationality of the 2050 chess world champion?
I hope Vietnamese ☺.

Is a knowledge of chess useful in everyday life?
A lot of skills are developed by practising the game of chess, which is definitely useful in life.

What is the best thing that was ever said about chess?
'Chess is a sport. A violent sport'
– Marcel Duchamp.

Against 1.d4, liberate your queenside bishop with 2...♗f5!



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